THE BLESSED HOPE

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by: Edw. Dennett

THE BLESSED HOPE:

BEING

PAPERS ON THE LORD'S COMING

AND CONNECTED EVENTS.

BY

E. Dennett

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PREFACE.

THESE papers, originally issued in *The Christian Friend and Instructor*, have been revised, and are now reprinted, with the earnest prayer that their perusal, with the Lord's blessing, may tend to revive the blessed hope of His return in the hearts of His people.

BLACKHEATH,
April, 1879.

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THE BLESSED HOPE.

CHAPTER I.

THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH.

We propose, if the Lord will, to treat in successive papers upon the subject of the Lord's coming, with its accompanying and subsequent events. As it is becoming every day more manifest that we are in the midst of the perilous times (2 Tim. iii.), it behoves the Lord's people to be increasingly occupied with the expectation of His return. It is now nearly fifty years since the cry was raised, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him." (Matt. xxv. 6.) Up till that time the Church had fallen into profound slumber, drugged by the opiate influences of the world, so that the doctrine of the Lord's return for His saints was forgotten, ignored, or denied. But when, through the action of the Spirit of God, this cry went forth, thousands were startled from their sleep, and, trimming their lamps, went forth once again

to meet the Bridegroom. For a season they lived daily in the hope of His return; and so mightily did this hope act upon their hearts and lives that it detached them from everything—every association, habit, and practice—unsuitable to Him for whom they waited, and kept them with their loins girt, and their lights burning, as those who were waiting for their Lord. (Luke xii. 35, 36.) But time went on; and while the doctrine of the Second Advent has been apprehended and taught by increasing numbers, and while the truth has been undoubtedly the support and consolation of many godly souls, it is yet a question if large numbers of the saints of God have not lost its freshness and power. For is it not patent to all observers, that the standard of separation is becoming lower and lower? that worldliness is on the increase? that saints are permitting themselves associations out of which they have professedly come? that many of us, therefore, are in danger of once more falling asleep, even with the doctrine of the hope upon our lips?

If this be so—and it is the subject of common remark—the time has come when the truth on this subject needs to be pressed home again upon the hearts and consciences of believers. For the Lord is at hand, and He desires that His people should be on the watch-tower, longing and eagerly waiting for His return. Surely therefore it is high

time to awake out of sleep, knowing that our salvation is nearer than when we believed, "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Heb. x. 37.) And He Himself has said, "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." (Luke xii. 37.)

We have in these remarks assumed, and now we proceed to prove from the Scriptures, THAT THE COMING OF THE LORD JESUS IS THE DISTINCTIVE HOPE OF THE CHURCH. This might be done from almost every book of the New Testament. We shall cite enough to place the subject beyond a doubt.

First, our Lord Himself prepared His disciples to maintain, after His departure, the expectation of His return. "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over His household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, *when He cometh,* shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That He shall make him ruler over all His goods." (Matt. xxiv. 45–47.) He then proceeds to characterize the evil servant as one who should say, "My Lord delayeth His coming," etc. (*v.* 48), and indicates the punishment into which such an one should fall. The next two parables—that of the

virgins, to which reference has been made, and that of the talents—teach distinctly the same lesson, and the more forcibly from the fact that the virgins who fell asleep, and the servants who received the talents, are the same who are dealt with respectively on the Lord's return.

The same instruction is found in St. Mark. "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. [For the Son of man is] as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." (Mark xiii. 33–37.)

In the gospel of St. Luke the same truth is repeated again and again. We have quoted one striking passage. (Luke xii. 35–37.) Another may be added: "He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, *Occupy till I come.*" (Luke xix. 12, 13.) Then, as in Matthew, we find him coming and examining the servants as to their use of the money entrusted to them. (*v.* 15.)

One scripture from St. John's gospel will suffice. The disciples were plunged into sorrow at the prospect of their Lord's departure from them. How does He meet the state of their souls? He says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again, and receive you unto myself;* that where I am, there ye may be also." (John xiv. 1–3.)

The four gospels therefore unite in distinct testimony to the return of the Lord for His people, and in the proclamation that this event constitutes their hope during His absence. We pass now to the Acts and the epistles.

Turning first of all to the Acts, what do we find? After His resurrection, the Lord had appeared to His disciples, "being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." (i. 3.) The time having come for His ascension, He led them out as far as Bethany (Luke xxiv. 50); and when He had ended His instructions, "while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven, as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said,

Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, *shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.*" (Acts i. 9–11.) Could any language be more precise? or, construed by the circumstances, be more significant? or, we may add, less likely to be misunderstood? They had seen their Lord depart from them. He was taken up, and they watched His receding form until a cloud intercepted Him from their gaze; and while they behold with mute astonishment, they receive the message that the One they had seen depart should return in like manner (and therefore in Person) as they had seen Him go into heaven. The wonder is, that with these distinct words the Church could have ever lost the hope of the Lord's return.

The evidence of the epistles is no less clear and decided. "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming" (revelation, margin) "of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. i. 7.) "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Phil. iii. 20.) "How ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven," etc. (1 Thess. i. 9, 10; see also ii. 19, iii. 13, iv. 15–18; 2 Thess. i. 7, ii. 1, iii. 5.) "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus

Christ." (Titus ii. 13.) "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." (Heb. ix. 28. Also James v. 7, 8; 1 Peter i. 7, 13; 2 Peter iii.; 1 John iii. 2; Rev. iii. 11; xxii. 7, 12, 20.)

Although these are only some of the scriptures which might be adduced, it will at once be seen how largely the subject is dealt with in the word of God; and on examination it will be discovered that this is because it is bound up, interwoven, with the very essence of Christianity. Take away the hope of the Lord's return, and you at once rob Christianity of its true character. It cannot be too strongly asserted, that it is not a doctrine to be accepted or rejected at pleasure, but that it is a part and parcel of the truth itself, connected with the calling and place of the believer, his relationship to Christ, and his future blessedness. Hence, indeed, St. Paul reminds the Thessalonians that they were converted to wait for God's Son from heaven; and every believer now is converted for the same thing. To be without this hope and expectation, therefore, is to be ignorant of the believer's portion in Christ.

It follows from this that the normal attitude of every believer is that of waiting for Christ. Nay, more, every one brought upon Christian ground has this characteristic, though he may be all un-

conscious of it; for the Word says that the ten virgins, five of whom were foolish, took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Their profession therefore—even though they had no oil—was that they were waiting for Christ.

Is this then the attitude of the reader? Are *you* waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus? Is this the one blessed hope that cheers your soul along your lonely pilgrim path? Are your eyes ever fixed upon the Bright and Morning Star? Or are you so absorbed in present things that, like the five foolish virgins, you have grown heavy, and fallen asleep? If, alas! it be so, let the words, "Behold, I come quickly," "Behold the Bridegroom," rouse you from your slumbers, even while there is delay, lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. Or perhaps you know the truth of His coming. But the question, beloved reader, is, Are you *waiting for* Christ? To know the doctrine is one thing; but it is quite another to be living hourly and daily in the hope of the Lord's return. If you are waiting, your affections are all concentred on Him whom you expect; you are apart from everything which is not according to His mind and will; you are sitting loose to all that nature holds dear; and with a full heart you can respond to His announcement of His speedy coming, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Rev. xxii. 20.)

CHAPTER II.

IS IT A PRESENT OR A DEFERRED HOPE?

THE question now arises, whether the coming of the Lord is an immediate hope, or whether we are to look for the occurrence of preceding events. This is a vital point; and hence it is necessary to be very careful in the consideration of the teaching of Scripture upon the subject.

Speaking generally, then, it may be said that there are three words found in connection with the Second Advent. The first is *παρουσία*—which means simply "coming;" and hence is applied to the personal coming of any one, as well as to that of Christ. (See 1 Cor. xvi. 17; 2 Cor. vii. 6; x. 10; Phil. i. 26; ii. 12; as examples of its use in the coming of persons.) It is used some sixteen times in relation to the coming of Christ. (Matt. xxiv. 3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Cor. xv. 23; 1 Thess. ii. 19; iii. 13; iv. 15; v. 23; 2 Thess. ii. 1, 8, 9; James v. 7, 8; 2 Peter i. 16; iii. 4.) The use of the word —from its very significance—is general; and does not therefore of itself indicate the precise character of the event with which it may be associated.

It is found alike, as will be seen from the above passages, in Matt. xxiv. and 1 Thess. iv. Another word is ἀποκάλυψις, and signifies "revelation," and this is used four times. (1 Cor. i. 7; 2 Thess. i. 7; 1 Peter i. 7, 13; and we might add, perhaps, 1 Peter iv. 13.) This word is fixed in its application—always referring to the revelation of our Lord from heaven; *i.e.* to His coming with His saints, and in judgment to the earth—as, for example, in 2 Thess. i. 7. The last word is ἐπιφανεία, and means "appearing" or "manifestation," and is rendered in the English Bible "appearing." This word is used once of the first coming of our Lord (2 Tim. i. 10); and five times (if we include 2 Thess. ii. 8, where it is used in conjunction with παρουσία) of His future appearing. In addition to this, it may be added that when the Lord announces His own coming (as, for example, in Rev. xxii. 7, 12, 20), He employs the common word ἔρχομαι—"I come."

Now the difficulty is this. If we have to wait for the appearing or the revelation of Christ, it is very evident that we cannot entertain any immediate expectation of the Lord. For we learn from Scripture that many events are to precede that time. Thus, to take 2 Thess. ii., the man of sin—in other words, the antichrist, is first to appear upon the scene; and this, as we are also taught, necessitates the previous restoration of the

Jews to their own land, the rebuilding of their temple, and the reëstablishment of their sacrificial services. (Matt. xxiv. 15; Daniel ix. 26, 27; Rev. xi.–xiii., etc.) Moreover the great tribulation, with all its sorrows, must, in that case, be passed through before the coming of the Lord.

Is this, then, the teaching of Scripture? In the first place, it cannot be denied that believers are spoken of as waiting for the appearing or revelation, as well as the coming of Christ. In 1 Cor. i. 7 the apostle says, "Ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming (ἀποκάλυψιν) of our Lord Jesus Christ." Again, writing to Timothy, he says, "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing (ἐπιφανείᾳ) of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Tim. vi. 14.) Once more, in his epistle to Titus, he says, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing (ἐπιφανείᾳ) of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus ii. 13.) Will believers, then —believers of this dispensation, *i.e.* the Church— remain upon the earth until the appearing of Christ? A close examination of Scripture shows that there are two distinct events defined: the coming of the Lord Jesus *for* His saints, and the coming of Christ *with* His saints. In 1 Thess. iii. 13, as well as in many other passages, we find the latter; and in 1 Thess. iv. 15–17 the former; and St. Paul teaches us most distinctly in Colos-

sians that the coming of Christ *with* His saints will take place at His appearing. He says, "When Christ [who is], our life, shall appear, *then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.*" (Col. iii. 4.) If this be so, the saints must have been caught up to be with Christ ere His return to the earth in public manifestation.

Leaving for the moment the difficulty already stated, but only to be able to solve it the more completely, we may inquire, Is there anything between the saint, as far as the Scriptures teach, and the return of the Lord? May the Christian, in other words, momentarily expect, be constantly waiting for, Christ? The teaching of our blessed Lord has been alluded to in the last paper; but we may once more recall the fact that, both in the parable of the virgins, and in that of the talents, no other conclusion could have been drawn from His words; for the virgins who fall asleep are the same who are awakened by the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom;" and the servants who receive the talents are the same who are reckoned with on His return. Collect, indeed, all the Scriptures in which He speaks of His coming, and it cannot be doubted for a moment that He intended His auditors to infer the possibility of His coming back at any, even the most unexpected, moment. (See Mark xiii. 34–37; Luke xii. 35–37; John xxi. 20, 21, etc.)

St. Paul uses language of like import. In writing to the Corinthians concerning the resurrection of the bodies of believers, he is careful—led of the Spirit of God—to say, "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. xv. 51); and in the epistle to the Thessalonians he says, "We who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." (1 Thess. iv. 15.) It is clear, therefore, by the use of the word "we," that he included himself as among the possible number who might be found alive on the Lord's return; and hence that, as far as he knew, there was nothing to hinder the Lord's coming for His saints during his own lifetime. That Peter thought it not improbable is likewise seen from the fact that he received a special revelation to inform him that he would have to die. (2 Peter i. 15.) And surely the fact that the last announcement of the inspired record is, "Surely I come quickly" (Rev. xxii. 20), would foster and strengthen the same conclusion.

But notwithstanding all this presumptive evidence, everything depends upon the question whether Christians (the Church) will remain on the earth until the Lord's appearing. If then we turn to Matt. xxiv., and contrast it with a scripture in Colossians, we shall find this question distinctly and plainly answered. In Matt. xxiv. we read, "Immediately after the tribulation of

those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (*vv.* 29, 30.) Here we have the order of events at the appearing of the Son of man; and the reader will mark that (1) there is the tribulation, (2) the disturbance of the heavenly luminaries, (3) the sign of the Son of man in heaven, (4) the mourning of the tribes of the earth, (5) their seeing the Son of man coming, etc., *while as yet the elect are upon the earth still ungathered.* But what have we read in Colossians? That "when Christ, [who is] our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." (Col. iii. 4.) So also in the Revelation, we find that when Christ comes out of heaven for judgment (His appearing), "the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, clean and white." (Rev. xix. 11–14.) Who are these? Their dress is characteristic, and supplies the answer; for in the eighth verse we

read, "the fine linen is the righteousness" (righteousness—δικαιώματά) "of saints."

Evidently, therefore, "the elect" in Matt. xxiv. cannot be the Church, since the saints who compose the Church appear with Christ; and in fact, as the chapter itself abundantly shows, they are the elect of Israel, the Jewish remnant whom God by His Spirit has prepared for the time when the Lord, whom they seek, shall come suddenly to His temple. (Mal. iii. 1.) It thus follows that the Lord Jesus will return for His people prior to His appearing; and, inasmuch as He destroys antichrist with the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. ii. 8), it must also be prior to his rise and sway, and hence also before the great tribulation, since (as will be seen in a future paper) this is connected with the time of the antichrist.

But thereon follows a further thing. All the predicted events which are looked for before the Lord's appearing are connected with the restoration of God's ancient people, and the actings of the man of sin, the son of perdition (the antichrist); *and consequently, as far as the Scriptures reveal, there is nothing whatever between the present moment and the possibility of the Lord's return.*

How, then, is the fact to be explained that we are said in Scripture to wait for the appearing, as well as for the coming, seeing that when Christ appears we appear with Him? Whenever the

question of responsibility is brought in, the appearing, and not the coming, is the goal; and this is because that, since the earth has been the scene of the responsibility, the earth also will be the scene of the displayed recompense. This in no way interferes with the fact that the coming of Christ for His saints at any moment is the proper hope of the believer. On the other hand, it throws additional light on the ways of God in the government of His people, brings out a new feature of the perfection of the Lord's dealings with His servants. When departing, He entrusted to them gifts for His service, saying, "Occupy till I come." (Luke xix. 13.) The responsibility of the servants in the use of that which has been committed to their charge is confined to, limited by, their sojourn upon the earth. Hence it is when the Lord returns to the earth that the result of their responsibility is declared. But it is not only in the use of gifts that this principle is seen; it is found in every sort of responsibility of the saint. The Corinthians came behind in no gift, waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Thessalonians are directed to look forward for the blessed issue of their persecutions to the time when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels (2 Thess. i. 7); and Timothy was to keep the commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of

our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Tim. vi. 14.) For it is then that He comes to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed (2 Thess. i. 10); and then, therefore, that there will be the public manifestation of the result and issue of the pathway of the saint through this world. This is the consummation and the fruition of the service of the believer, as well as the time when the rights of the Lord Jesus Himself shall be declared and vindicated, and consequently, in this aspect, we are said to love His appearing. (2 Tim. iv. 8.)

But, as we have shown from the Scriptures, the Lord returns for His saints before His appearing; and it is to His coming, therefore, for them that their eye is directed. This is the proper object of our hope. Our hearts occupied with Himself, we wait longingly for the moment when, according to His word, He will come to receive us to Himself, that where He is we may be also. (John xiv. 3.) Such, then, is our attitude. As Israel on the Passover night, with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand, waited for the signal to depart, so we should ever be found, with our loins girt and our lamps burning, expecting the Lord to descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, to fetch us out of this scene, to be for ever with Himself. Are we constantly main-

taining this attitude? Do we begin the day with the thought that, ere the darkness returns, we may be caught up into the unclouded light of His presence? When we lie down at night, do we remember that ere the morning dawns we may be caught away from our beds? Are all our matters kept so constantly arranged that we should desire to alter nothing, if the next moment we should be with the Lord? Are all our purposes, all our occupations, undertaken and carried on with this wondrous prospect before our eyes? Surely nothing short of this should satisfy those who are living in the expectation of the Lord. May He Himself lead us into all the power of this blessed truth, using it to separate us increasingly from everything not suitable to Himself; and, by the presentation of Himself to us in all His beauty as the Bright and Morning Star, may He occupy and absorb our hearts!

"'A little while'—come, Saviour, come!
For Thee Thy Bride has tarried long;
Take Thy poor waiting pilgrims home,
To sing the new eternal song,
To see Thy glory, and to be
In everything conformed to Thee!"

CHAPTER III.

THE RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS.

When the Lord returns for His people two things will take place—the resurrection of the dead in Christ, and the change of living believers; and then both alike will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. This is distinctly taught in 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. Our blessed Lord Himself foreshadowed this truth, indeed stated it, though His meaning could scarcely be apprehended without the further light of the epistles. On His way to Bethany, after the death of Lazarus, He said to Martha, "Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto Him, I know that He shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." (John xi. 23–26.) Here then we have the same two classes—those who believed in Christ, but who should have died ere His return, these should live; and secondly, those who should

be then alive, and believed in Him, these should never die—corresponding exactly with the two classes found in 1 Thess. iv.

In order however to make the subject clear and simple, it must first be shown that only believers will be raised from the dead at the second coming of our Lord. There is no doctrine more plainly taught in the Scripture, or so completely overlooked or ignored by the mass of professing Christians. The common thought is, that at the end of the world, at the close of the millennium, there will be a resurrection alike of believers and unbelievers; that all together will be arraigned before the judgment-seat, and that then the eternal destiny of each will be declared. But this theological conception, albeit so widely taught and accepted, not only has no foundation in, but is also directly opposed to, the teaching of the word of God. This will be confessed if attention is given to the proofs about to be adduced, that none but believers will be raised at the Lord's coming.

First of all, a few Scriptures may be cited from the gospels, in addition to that from John xi. On coming down from the mount of transfiguration, the Lord charged His disciples that they should not tell what they had seen, "till the Son of man were risen from among the dead" (ἐκ νεκρῶν). "And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising

from among" (ἐκ νεκρῶν) "the dead should mean." (Mark ix. 9, 10.) They believed, as Martha did, that there would be a resurrection at the last day (John xi. 24); but hitherto they had never heard of a resurrection from among the dead, and this it was that caused their astonishment. Here, of course, it was the resurrection of Christ Himself that was in question; but inasmuch as He was the first-fruits of His own, His resurrection was both the pledge and type of theirs. In Luke xiv. 14 we find the expression, "the resurrection of the just;" and in another chapter (xx. 35) the Lord speaks of those "who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world" (αἰῶνος), "and the resurrection from among the dead" (καὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως τῆς ἐκ νεκρῶν). The phrase which the Lord uses is unmistakable in its signification that it is a partial resurrection, that those who obtain this resurrection will leave others behind them in their graves. The teaching of John v. 28, 29, supports the same conclusion. Going back to the 25th verse, it will be noted that the term "hour" includes a whole dispensation. "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." That hour has lasted from that moment until the present time, in accordance with the preceding verse, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting

life, and shall not come into condemnation; *but is passed from death unto life;*" and it will last until the Lord's return. It marks the whole day of grace. In like manner the term "hour" in the 28th verse includes a whole dispensation. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life: and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation"—judgment (κρίσεως). Two resurrections are thus clearly distinguished: that of life, which will take place, as we shall see, at the coming of the Lord; and that of judgment, which will take place after the close of the millennium. (Rev. xx. 11–15.)

If we turn now to the epistles we shall find even more exact statements. The subject of 1 Cor. xv. is the resurrection of the body; and yet not the resurrection of the bodies of all, but only that of believers. This may be seen at a glance. After then showing the consequences of the false doctrine—that there was no resurrection—the apostle states the truth: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order, Christ the first-fruits; *afterward they that are*

Christ's at His coming." (1 Cor. xv. 20–23.) Language could not be more exact or explicit. So also in the scripture already cited (1 Thess. iv.) it is said, "The dead in Christ shall rise first" (no others are within the apostle's view): "then we which are alive and remain," &c. There is not a thought of unbelievers being included. It is this fact which explains this same apostle's expression in another epistle: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (rather, from among the dead, *τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν*). (Phil. iii. 11.)

One more scripture may be permitted. In Rev. xx. we read of some who "lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." The application of this scripture will be examined, if the Lord will, in a future paper; but attention now is called to the following statement: "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." (*vv.* 4, 5.) It is remembered that interpreters have sought to prove that this is a spiritual resurrection (whatever that may mean); but if so, then the resurrection at the close of the chapter is not a literal one, and hence they would prove, like the false teachers at Corinth, that there is no resurrection of the dead! No; language so clear and unmistakeable, especially when taken in connection with the other scriptures adduced, places beyond

all doubt that God in His grace has purposed that believers should rise from among the dead at the coming of the Lord; and this is called the first resurrection. Hence it is that the term first-fruits is applied to the resurrection of our blessed Lord (1 Cor. xv. 20), being the first-fruits of the harvest of His own to be gathered in at His coming. (See Lev. xxiii. 10, 11.)

There is one scripture, however, which may seem, in the minds of those who have not examined the subject, to contradict the above statements. This is the well-known passage in Matt. xxv., in which we find the sheep and the goats gathered before Christ at the same time. This scene, popularly conceived to be a description of the final judgment, is often adduced in opposition to the truth of the first resurrection of believers. But the slightest examination of the words used by our blessed Lord will show that He does not allude to the subject of the resurrection: "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations," etc. (*vv.* 31, 32.) The reference is therefore to His appearing and kingdom, and to His judgment of the living, and not of the dead. We do not speak of "the nations" in respect of the dead: this term describes the living. And observe, too, that there are three classes—the

sheep, the goats, and the brethren of the King; and this fact itself fixes the interpretation of the whole scene, showing conclusively that it is the judgment of the living nations consequent upon the appearing of the Son of man in His glory, and His assumption of His throne. The "brethren" therefore are Jews, who had been sent out as the King's messengers with the annunciation of His kingdom; and those who received them and their message are the sheep, and those who rejected them are the goats. Their relationship to the King is made dependent upon their treatment of His messengers. (See for this principle Matt. x. 40–42.)

Having then established that when the Lord returns it is to fetch His own, whether they have previously died, or are living still upon the earth, according to His word—"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself" (John xiv. 3)—we may now consider the manner of His coming, as well as the rapture of the saints. The most precise instruction is given to us upon the subject in a scripture already referred to, but which may now be quoted at large. "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by

the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent" (go before, or anticipate) "them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thess. iv. 13–17.) The bearing of this important passage is sometimes overlooked from inattention to its exact statements. The Thessalonian saints did not doubt concerning their portion in Christ on His return; but, somehow or other, they had fallen into the error of supposing that those who had fallen asleep before that event would suffer loss. It is to correct this mistake that the apostle gives some special instruction "by the word of the Lord," *i.e.* by a revelation upon this particular subject. He shows, then, that all who sleep in (or through, διὰ) Jesus, God will bring back with Him, that this indeed is connected with our faith in, and is a consequence of, the death and resurrection of Christ. Thereon he explains how this is possible, and this explanation it is which formed the subject of the special revelation to which we have alluded. The Lord will come, and then the dead in Christ will be

raised, the living changed, and thus will be caught up *together* with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, etc.

This may take place, as we saw in the last paper, at any moment. Let us therefore familiarize our minds with the scene. Suddenly, then, the Lord Himself will descend from heaven in the manner here described. First, with a shout. This has occasioned a difficulty in many minds. If, they have thought, the Lord returns only for His people, and He descends with a shout, must it not then be in a public manner? By no means necessarily. The word itself is one of relationship, indicating, for example, the order of a commander to his soldiers; and thus it is a shout intended only for those to whom it is addressed, and the import of which would not be understood by others. When our blessed Lord was upon the earth, a voice came to Him from heaven, and some of the bystanders thought that it thundered, while others said "an angel spake to Him." (John xii. 28, 29.) So also at the conversion of Saul, his companions heard a voice, *i.e.* the sound of a voice (Acts ix. 7); "but they did not hear the voice of Him that spake to me," *i.e.* the significance of the voice. (Acts xxii. 9; compare Daniel x. 7.) So will it be when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven. All His own will hear and understand the import of the shout; but *if* heard

by others it will only seem as the roll of distant thunder, or, taken in combination with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, should these be likewise heard, as a strange phenomenon, to be discussed and explained by scientific men. It is probable that the three—the shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God (see Numbers x.)—have but one object, the summoning, the assembling together, of the dead and living saints for their translation into the presence of their Lord.

Two effects follow, and follow instantaneously; for the apostle says in another epistle, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*, at the last trump." (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.) "The dead in Christ shall rise first." What a stupendous scene! All that are Christ's, including, therefore, saints of the past, as well as of the present dispensation, shall rise at His coming. (1 Cor. xv. 23.) Tracing down the line of the ages from Adam till the last saint to be gathered in, all this countless multitude will, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," spring up from their graves—raised incorruptible. And not only so, but all the saints then living will be changed, so that all alike will be clothed upon with their resurrection bodies, in fashion like unto Christ's body of glory. (Phil. iii. 21.) It is, then, when this corruptible shall

have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, that the saying that is written will be brought to pass, "Death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Cor. xv. 54; see also 2 Cor. v. 1–4.) But no sooner has this marvellous change been wrought, than all its subjects will be caught up "in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Then the Lord Himself enters for the first time, as far as His people are concerned, upon the full fruit of His redemption-work, of the travail of His soul. And what tongue could tell, or pen describe, His joy when He thus redeems from the grave the very bodies of His people, and when He brings by the word of His power all His chosen ones into His presence, and all conformed to His own image! Nor is it possible to express even our own joy, the joy on which we then shall enter, when the longing desires of our hearts are all realized, and, like Him, we shall behold His face, see Him as He is, and be with Him for ever.

"Knowing as I am known!"
How shall I love that word,
How oft repeat before the throne,
"For ever with the Lord!"

It is for this we wait, and the time is not far distant when all will be accomplished; for we rest on the sure word of our faithful Lord, who has said, "Surely I come quickly."

CHAPTER IV.

THE JUDGMENT-SEAT OF CHRIST.

"We all," says the apostle, "must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." (2 Cor. v. 10.) He includes in this statement, undoubtedly, both believers and unbelievers, though, as will be seen in the course of these papers, there is a long intervening period between the judgment of the two classes; for there is not the least foundation in the word of God for the common idea that saints and sinners will appear at the same time before the judgment-seat. But it is with believers that we are now concerned, and their appearance before the tribunal of Christ will take place between His coming and His appearing. Caught up, as we saw in our last paper, to meet the Lord in the air, they are then like Christ, will see Him as He is (1 John iii. 2), and will be with Him for ever. (1 Thess. iv. 17.) The place to which they are translated, and in which they will be with the Lord, is the Father's house. This we know from the Lord's own words, "In my Father's house are

many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John xiv. 2, 3.) There the blessed Lord will conduct all His own, and, if we may adapt the words, will present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24); and with what overflowing joy will He and the children God has given Him appear before His Father and their Father, and His God and their God! And with what joy will God Himself behold the fruit and perfection of His own counsels, the redeemed all conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren! (Rom. viii. 29.)

The saints, then, will dwell in the Father's house during the interval that will elapse between the coming of Christ for, and His return with, His saints; and, as before remarked, it is during this time that they will be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ. The proof of this is found in Rev. xix. Just on the eve of returning with Christ (*vv.* 11–14), John tells us, "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the

Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness (*δικαιώματά*) of saints." (*vv.* 6–8.) Here then we find the saints robed in their (not God's) righteousness, the fruit of their practical ways, produced and wrought out surely by the Holy Spirit, but nevertheless counted as theirs in the wonderful grace of God; and hence, since the judgment-seat of Christ for believers is concerning the things done in their body, this can only be the results of declared judgment. The arraying the Lamb's wife in the fine linen, clean and white, will therefore follow upon the manifestation of the saints before Christ's tribunal; and both take place, as it would seem from this chapter, preparatory to, and immediately before, the appearing of the Lord with His saints. Had we not this instruction, we might have thought that the judgment-seat at least would have followed close upon the rapture. But there is grace in its postponement. The saints are caught up, and are with the Lord in the Father's house, and they are permitted to become familiar with, and, if we may use the word, at home in, the glory into which they have been introduced, before the question of the deeds done in the body is brought up for settlement.

The character of the judgment must be distinctly

observed, and one or two preliminary remarks will greatly conduce both to prevent mistake and to the understanding of the subject.

(1.) The believer will never be judged for sins. It is in the passage before us not sins, but deeds done in the body; and indeed to suppose that the question of our guilt, our sins, could be again raised is to overlook, not to say falsify, the character of grace and the work of redemption. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, *and shall not come into judgment* (κρίσιν); but is passed from death unto life." (John v. 24.) Again we are told, "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. x. 14.) The question of sin was settled, and closed for ever, at the cross; and every believer is before God in all the abiding efficacy of the sacrifice there offered, yea, accepted in the Beloved. Even now therefore we are without spot before God, and our sins and iniquities will be remembered no more. (Heb. x. 17.)

(2.) This will be at once seen when it is remembered that we shall have our glorified bodies —be like Christ—before we are manifested before His judgment-seat; for, as already pointed out, the resurrection of the saints who have fallen asleep in Christ, and the change of the living, and the rapture of both into the presence of the Lord,

will precede our judgment. This is unspeakable consolation; for being already like Christ, we shall have full fellowship with Him in every judgment He passes upon our works; and we shall therefore rejoice at the exposure and rejection of all that flowed, in our lives down here, from the flesh, and not from the Holy Spirit. This answers the question sometimes put, Whether we shall not tremble and be ashamed as all the deeds of our Christian life are brought up and shown out in their real character? Indeed, as another has said, "We are in the light by faith when the conscience is in the presence of God. We shall be according to the perfection of that light when we appear before the tribunal of Christ. I have said that it is a solemn thing, and so it is; for everything is judged according to that light; but it is that which the heart loves, because, thanks to our God, we *are* light in Christ!

"But there is more than this. When the Christian is thus manifested, he is already glorified, and, perfectly like Christ, has no remains of the evil nature in which he sinned; and he can now look back at all the way God has led him in grace—helped, lifted up, kept from falling, not withdrawn His eyes from the righteous. He knows as he is known. What a tale of grace and mercy! If I look back now, my sins do not rest on my conscience, though I have a horror of them; they are

put away behind God's back. I am the righteousness of God in Christ; but what a sense of love and patience, and goodness and grace! How much more perfect then, when all is before me! Surely there is great gain as to light and love in giving an account of ourselves to God, and not a trace remains of the evil in us. We are like Christ. If a person fears to have all out thus before God, I do not believe he is free in soul as to righteousness, being the righteousness of God in Christ, not fully in the light. And we have not to be judged for anything; Christ has put it all away."

Bearing these things in mind, we may consider more closely the nature of the judgment itself. It is not we ourselves who have to be judged, nor, as has been abundantly explained, will our sins reappear against us, but, as the Scripture itself says, "we must all appear" (be manifested, *φανερωθῆναι*) "before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad." The body of the believer is the Lord's, a member of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. vi. 15–19), and is therefore to be used in His service for the display of Christ Himself. (Rom. xii. 1; 2 Cor. iv. 10.) Hence the apostle's earnest expectation and hope was that Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death. (Phil. i. 20.) It is on this

account that we are responsible for the deeds done in our body, so that while we are perfected for ever through the one offering of Christ, and there cannot be therefore any further imputation of sin to us, every act of our lives, not only as service, but every deed which we have done, will be manifested, tested, and judged when before the judgment-seat of Christ. The good will be seen, and declared to be such; and while these were surely produced, wrought out in, and by us, through the grace of God, and the power of His Spirit, they will be reckoned, in His infinite compassion, as ours, and as such we shall receive the recompense. The bad, however fair they appeared here, will also be seen and recognised in their true character, and belonging to none but ourselves, the product of the flesh, will receive their just condemnation, we ourselves rejoicing to behold everything that had dishonoured our blessed Lord, though done by ourselves, receiving its righteous meed and doom. The time for concealments will then be gone; for that which maketh everything manifest is light, and then everything will be searched and tested by the full blaze of the light of the holiness of that judgment-seat.

It is a question worthy of consideration whether this truth occupies its due place in our souls. Knowing grace and the fulness of redemption,

there is a danger of overlooking or forgetting our responsibility. But this should never be the case; and the prospect of the judgment-seat of Christ, while it has not a shade of apprehension for the believer, is yet intended to exert a most practical influence on our souls. The very connection in which it is found shows this to be the case. "We are confident," says the apostle, "and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him [rather, acceptable to Him εὐάρεστοι αὐτῷ]. For we must all appear," &c. (2 Cor. v. 8–10.) The prospect therefore braced up the soul of the apostle, stimulating him with unwearied zeal in all that he did to seek only the approbation of Christ. In fact, this is precisely what it does for us, enabling us to bring all our actions into the light of His presence now, and helping us to do them for and unto Himself. Herein indeed lies our strength. Satan is very subtle, and often tempts us to be men-pleasers; but when we remember that all will be manifested before the judgment-seat, we are impervious to his snares, knowing that if we commend ourselves to others, it may be at the cost of displeasing Christ. And what the profit of practising deception, whether upon ourselves or upon others, when the nature of all that we do is so soon to

be exposed? To be acceptable to Christ will be our aim just in proportion as we have His tribunal before our souls.

It will likewise help us to be patient under misconception, and in the presence of wrong-doing or evil. During the days of the Reformation in Italy, a monk, who had received the truth of the gospel, was subjected to close confinement under the custody of a brother monk. Through a long period of years he bore without a murmur the harsh and rigorous treatment of his jailor. Finally, he was ordered forth to be executed. As he left the cell which had been his prison-house, he turned to his custodian, and meekly said, "Brother, we shall soon know which of us has been pleasing to the Lord." We also, in like manner, can calmly leave every disputed question, whether concerning ourselves or our brethren, to be settled before the judgment-seat of Christ. We shall thus be able to adopt the language of the apostle, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment (man's day—ἀνθρωπίνης ἡμέρας); yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing of myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the

heart: and then shall every man have praise of God." (1 Cor. iv. 3–5.) The influence of this truth, if held in the power of the Holy Ghost, would be incalculable. It would produce in us exercised consciences even in respect of our smallest actions, as it would keep the holiness of the Lord, whom we serve, continually before our souls; and at the same time it would save us from being occupied with the failures of our brethren, as we should be constantly reminded of the words of the apostle, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth." (Rom. xiv. 4.)

The Lord give us to live more continually under the power of this truth, that all our words and acts may be spoken and done in the light of that day.

CHAPTER V.

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB.

ANOTHER event takes place in heaven, after the judgment-seat of Christ, before His return with His saints; viz., the marriage supper of the Lamb. The scripture that refers to it may again be cited: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." (Rev. xix. 7–9.) In this heavenly scene we behold the consummation of redemption, in respect of the church, in her presentation to, and everlasting union with, the Object of all her hopes and affections.

A few preliminary words, however, may be necessary for the apprehension of the true character of this scene. From many passages of Scripture we gather that the church is not only

the body (Eph. i. 23, v. 30; Col. i. 18; 1 Cor. xii. 27, &c.), but also the bride of Christ. St. Paul thus tells the Corinthians, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Cor. xi. 2.) Again, when expounding the duties of husbands to their wives, he enforces them on the distinct ground of marriage being a type of the union of Christ with the church. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. v. 25–27.) Once more: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (*vv.* 31, 32.) Here the Spirit of God carries us back to the formation of Eve out of Adam, and her presentation to and union with him as his wife, as a type of the presentation of the church to Christ, the last Adam. As long as He was down here as a man, He abode alone; but a deep sleep, even the sleep of death, fell also upon Him, according to the purpose of God; and as the fruit of His work, through the descent of the Holy Ghost, the church was formed

—formed and united to Him; so that, as Adam said of Eve, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. ii. 23), we (believers) can say, "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." (Eph. v. 30.)

But another thing is brought before us in the Ephesians. It is said that Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it. His love therefore was the source of all—His motive, in this aspect, for the gift of Himself. Finding the one pearl of great price, valuing it according to the estimate of His own affections, He went and sold all that He had, and bought it (Matt. xiii. 46); He gave Himself (and giving Himself, He gave "all that love could give") for it. And He gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; thus making the church morally suitable to Himself, "that He might present it to Himself a glorious church," &c. We have thus three steps—past, present, and future. He gave Himself for it in His death upon the cross; He cleanses it (the process He is carrying on now through His intercession at the right hand of God, in answer to which there is the washing of water by the word); and He presents it to Himself—which takes place at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And all, every step, be it remarked, is the fruit of His love. If He still waits at the right hand

of God, it is only that every one who is to be a part of His bride shall be brought in. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me" (John vi. 37); and He has purchased, redeemed, all by the gift of Himself. He will therefore keep His seat until the last of these is brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light. Then He will delay no longer; for the same love that moved Him to give Himself will impel Him to fetch His bride. Hence He presents Himself to the church, saying, "Behold, I come quickly," reminding her that His love never wearies, that He is eagerly waiting for the moment when He can come to receive her unto Himself. Having fetched His own, in the manner described in a former paper, and brought them into the Father's house, and having manifested all before His judgment-seat, the time for the marriage has come, and it is this event which is celebrated in the passage cited from the Revelation.

It is the marriage of the *Lamb* (Rev. xix. 7); and, as another has said, "'the Lamb' is a figure or description of the Son of God, which tells us of the sorrows He endured for us. The soul understands this, and therefore this title, 'the Lamb's wife,' tells that it is by *His sufferings* the Lord has made her His own; that He so valued her as to give up all for her." Even now believers are united to Christ; but the marriage speaks of

another thing. It is the time when all the believers of this dispensation—embracing all from Pentecost until the Lord's return—already glorified, and looked at corporately, are fully and finally associated with the risen and glorified Man, with the One who, in His own matchless grace and peerless love, has chosen the church to be His companion for ever. He is, in the scene before us, on the eve of His appearing; but ere He returns to the place of His rejection He will formally take into union with Himself her who has shared in measure His sorrows and sufferings, that He may display her to the world as sharing in the same glory with Himself. "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." (John xvii. 22, 23.) This refers to the time when He returns to take His power and reign,

> "And earth His royal bride shall see
> Beside Him on the throne."

The marriage is preparatory to this public display, and is the expression of His own heart in thus bringing the church into participation with Himself of His own glory and His own joy.

Combining the Scripture in Ephesians with that before us, it may be seen that the wife will be

robed in a twofold beauty. Here we are told that "His wife hath made herself ready, and to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white." There it is said that He will "present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. v. 27.) This last beauty is the result of what Christ has done for her. "He gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word." Thereby, as already seen, He has made her morally a suitable companion to Himself; and as He has now brought her before Himself, she shines resplendent with His own beauty, reflecting His own glory. It is His own likeness He sees before Him, reproduced in His wife; and He has thus made her the meet companion of His exaltation and glory.

But the fine linen indicates another kind of beauty. It is the righteousness of saints (*v.* 8)—the result, as before pointed out, of the manifestation before the judgment-seat of Christ. This fact wonderfully enhances our conceptions of the grace of our God. If we do a single thing which meets His approval, it can only be through the power which He Himself has given us; "for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. ii. 10.) And yet He

will adorn us with all the fruit and beauty of that which has been wrought out in and by us through His own grace and power. Every kind of beauty therefore—both divine and human—will characterize the Lamb's wife, according to the perfection of God's thoughts and counsels, and according also to the mind and heart of the Lamb.

Several distinct things mark the celebration of the marriage. First, there is the outburst of joy and praise, as "the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." (*v.* 6.) The marriage, indeed, as the chapter shows, is immediately before the coming forth in judgment of the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, and hence is on the eve of the world-sovereignty of "our Lord and His Christ." (Rev. xi. 15.) Then they cry, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lord is come," &c. (*v.* 7.) The nuptials of the Lamb therefore excite the wondering adoration of heaven, of all the servants of God, and of them that fear Him, both small and great. (*v.* 5.) Last of all, John is commanded to write, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." The portion of the wife is as unique as it is incomparable; but even those who are invited to have fellowship with the joy of that day are

pronounced blessed. And no wonder; for they are admitted to view the consummation of the desires of Christ, His joy in presenting to Himself her for whom He had died, and who, made meet for her association with Himself, was now robed in the glory of God. (John xvii. 22; Rev. xxi. 10, 11.] It is therefore a day of unbroken joy—joy to the heart of God, joy to the Lamb and His wife, and joy to all who are permitted to behold this wondrous scene. But it is the Lamb Himself who attracts our gaze as the prominent figure of that day; and it is called, as one has said, "the marriage of the Lamb, not the marriage of the Church or of the Lamb's wife, but of *the Lamb*, as though the Lamb was the one chiefly interested in that joy. The Church will have her joy in Christ, but Christ will have His greater joy in the Church. The strongest pulse of gladness that is to beat for eternity will be in the bosom of the Lord over His ransomed bride. In all things He is to have the pre-eminence; and as in all things, so in this—that His joy in her will be greater than hers in Him."

"For thee, His royal bride—for thee,
His brightest glories shine;
And, happier still, His changeless heart,
With all its love, is thine."

CHAPTER VI.

THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS.

THERE is nothing more certain from the word of God than that the Jews, who are now dispersed throughout the world, will be restored to their own land; for "He that scattered Israel will gather him." (Jer. xxxi. 10.) The time of their restoration is not revealed; but inasmuch as they are found in the land soon after the rapture of the saints, it is evident that it will take place about that time, whether before or after it would be impossible to say, but probably afterwards, because otherwise there would be a visible sign of the Lord's being at hand.

A brief reference to God's ways in government on the earth will very much simplify and facilitate our understanding of this subject. We learn from the prophet Daniel that, on the utter failure of Israel as the depositary of God's power in the earth, the dominion was transferred to the Gentiles. Thus, in the interpretation of the great image which Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his

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dream, Daniel says: "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heaven, hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold." (Daniel ii. 37, 38.) Three empires would follow —the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman; and the last of these, disappearing for a time, would finally revive, but be divided into ten kingdoms, as symbolized by the ten toes of the image, all of which however would be united in a common federation under one supreme head. (Dan. ii. 31–43; vii.; Rev. xiii. and xvii.) These empires reach down to the end, but the last is superseded, and indeed destroyed, by the kingdom of Christ; for "in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." (Dan. ii. 44; see also Rev. xix. 11–21, and xx.) Now the period which embraces the whole of these monarchies is termed "the times of the Gentiles," during which, according to the words of our Lord, Jerusalem is to be "trodden down of the Gentiles." (Luke xxi. 24.) The absence of the Jews therefore from their own

land will coincide, or nearly so, with this period. But God's purposes concerning His ancient people will yet be accomplished, "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (Rom. xi. 29.) And hence, together with the completion and rapture of the church, God will commence to deal again with that nation.

It is true that a small remnant, mainly composed of the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin (Ezra x. 7–9), was permitted to return to Jerusalem during the reign of Cyrus, the account of which we have in Ezra and Nehemiah; but this was in no way a national restoration, nor the full accomplishment of God's purposes, for Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi all prophesied after this period, and speak of the time of the national blessing as yet future. (Haggai ii. 7–9; Zech. ix.–xiv.; Mal. iii. and iv.) Indeed from the time of this return until the birth of our Lord, so far from being an independent nation, they were always in subjection to the Gentile power. In such a condition there was nothing to answer to the glowing prediction of the prophet: "And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the

forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those kingdoms shall be utterly wasted." (Isa. lx. 10–12.) The object indeed of this partial return would seem to have been that Christ might be born among them, according to the predictions of the prophets, and be presented to them as the Messiah. This took place; and the gospel of Matthew, which especially deals with this subject, gives us in full the results. He was utterly rejected. They chose Barabbas that they might compass the destruction of Christ. "The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath He done? But they cry out the more, saying, Let Him be crucified." (Matt. xxvii. 21–23.) In the gospel of St. John their iniquity is, if possible, still more strikingly displayed. "Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar." (John xix. 15.) They thus deliberately renounced the hope and glory of their nation, rejected their Messiah in their wicked desire to secure the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth; and from that day to this

they have been suffering the consequences of their fearful crime, as outcasts and a bye-word, among the nations of the earth.

But God, whatever the sin of His people, cannot deny Himself; and in the death of Him whom His ancient people rejected (for He died for that nation—John xi. 52), He laid the foundation for their future restoration and blessing. The evidence of this is so abundant that it is difficult to know where to begin or end; but a few scriptures may be selected, leaving our readers to trace out the details at their own leisure. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." (Isa. xi. 11, 12, *et seq.*) Again we read, that "the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord

for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors." (Isa. xix. 1–3.) Read also Isa. xxv. 6–12; xxvi.; xxvii. 6; xxx. 18–26; xxxv. 10; xlix. 7–26; liv.; lx.; lxi., &c. The language of Jeremiah is no less distinct: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land." (Jer. xxiii. 5–8. Read especially chaps. xxx., xxxi., and xxxiii.) There is scarcely a prophet, indeed, that does not touch upon the subject; and in such plain words that, had not Zion been confounded with the Church, no one could have doubted of God's intentions towards His ancient people. If, moreover, the testimony of the prophets had been less precise, the argument of St. Paul in Rom. xi. should have sufficed

to teach us that He will never forego His purposes of grace and blessing towards the seed of Abraham; for, after showing that God hath not cast away His people (Israel), he says: "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." (25–27.) Two things, indeed, are clear from this scripture; that blessing is reserved for Israel, and that their Deliverer shall come out of Zion; showing that they must be in their own land previously to the blessing here described.

There are, however, several stages in their restoration before this full result spoken of by St. Paul is reached. A portion will return to Palestine in unbelief. This is certain from the fact that Zechariah describes their conversion in the land by the appearing of the Lord. (Zech. xxii. 9–14; xiii. 1. See also Isa. xvii. 10, 11; xxviii. 14, 15.) While in their unbelief they will build a temple, and seek to restore their sacrificial services; and thus will pave the way for the setting up by the antichrist of the abomination of

desolation in the holy place, of which our Lord forewarned His disciples. (Matt. xxiv. 15; see also Rev. xi. 1, 2; Isa. lxvi. 1–6.) There will be, however, a remnant in the midst of their unbelieving brethren who will stay themselves upon God, who, not yet knowing their Messiah, will cry to the Lord in their distress, and will be preserved from the abominations into which the mass of the nation will fall. These are the elect remnant whose experiences are so largely developed in the Psalms, and in some of the prophets.

The restoration of the ten tribes will be effected after the Lord has taken His kingdom. Inasmuch as they had no part in the rejection and crucifixion of Christ, although they will be judged for their own sins, they will be spared the fearful and peculiar trials through which their brethren will have to pass, in consequence of their acceptance of, and connection with, the antichrist. It is therefore not until after the return of Christ that He will bring to light and restore this long-lost portion of His people. Ezekiel describes the method of their restoration: "As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you; and I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured

out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord." The rest are brought, and the prophet proceeds: "And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers." (Ezek. xx. 33–44; also xxxiv.) Jeremiah goes farther, and describes their coming into the land in language of singular beauty and pathos: "For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God. For thus saith the Lord, Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O Lord, save thy people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that

travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn." Then he proceeds to declare still further the purpose of the Lord concerning His people, and their consequent heritage of joy: "Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord." (Jer. xxxi. 6–14.)

The ten tribes thus brought back, we are told, moreover, that they will be united together with

Judah under the happy and glorious sway of their Messiah; that "they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more," and that God's servant "David [the true David, Christ] shall be their Prince for ever." (Ezek. xxxvii. 21–28.)

We thus see that God has not forgotten His covenant with Abraham (Gen. xvii. 4–8); for while Israel failed in responsibility, and forfeited all claim upon God, He yet in faithfulness to His own word, in the wonders of His grace, will perform all that He has spoken. And the time draws near when Israel, once again restored to their own land, "shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." (Isa. xxvii. 6.) For "thus saith the Lord: If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them." (Jer. xxxiii. 25, 26.)

CHAPTER VII.

THE APOSTASY AND THE ANTICHRIST.

In the interval between the rapture of the saints and the appearing of Christ, the earth will be the scene of some of the most awful events which the world has ever witnessed. Among these will be the apostasy—the open abandonment of all profession of Christianity, yea, the denial both of the Father and the Son (1 John ii. 22), and the appearance of the man of sin, the son of perdition, or the antichrist. St. Paul has given us most distinct and precise instruction upon these subjects. False teachers had sought to disturb the minds of the Thessalonian believers by alleging that the day of the Lord was already come. It was to meet this error that he wrote, "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand (the day of the Lord is present).* Let no man deceive you by any

* This is the true reading and rendering, as confessed by those competent to form a judgment.

means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he himself (the words "as God" should be omitted) sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." (2 Thess. ii. 1–4.) We are therefore plainly warned that "the falling away" (the apostasy), and the man of sin, will be seen in the interval between the rapture of the saints and the day of the Lord. For the apostle grounds his exhortation to these believers on the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him. As another has explained this scripture: "Their gathering together unto Christ in the air was a demonstration of the impossibility of the day of the Lord being already come. Moreover with regard to this last he presents two considerations: first, the day could not be already come, since Christians were not yet gathered to the Lord, and they were to come *with* Him; second, the wicked one who was then to be judged had not yet appeared, so that the judgment could not be executed."

Thereon the apostle proceeds to show that until the Church is caught away this consummation and embodiment of wickedness cannot be reached. "And now ye know what withholdeth" (that which restrains) "that he might be revealed in his time.

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, &c. (*vv.* 6–8.) In the light, then, of this and other scriptures, we may trace a little both the "falling away," and the man of sin.

1. The Apostasy. This was foreseen and predicted from the earliest days of Christianity. Nay, our Lord Himself plainly points to it in some of His parables, and never speaks of the gradual diffusion of the truth until the whole world should be brought to confess Him as Lord. On the other hand He compares the kingdom of heaven, as seen in the world, "unto leaven" (and leaven in the Scriptures has generally the significance of corruption) "which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." (Matt. xiii. 33; see also the parable of the tares, and of the mustard seed, in the same chapter.) St. Paul, moreover, tells the elders of the Church at Ephesus, "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts xx. 29, 30.) And passing by his allusions to the subject, we find in his two epistles to Timothy (1 Tim. iv.; 2 Tim. iii.) express descriptions of the evils of the "latter times," and of "the perilous times" of "the last

days." What can be, indeed, more direct and emphatic than the scripture cited from 2 Thessalonians? For he there warns the saints to whom he writes that the mystery of iniquity was already working, and though for the time restrained, would at last, when the restraint was removed, rise so rapidly and mightily that, passing over all bounds, it would finally reach its consummation in that fearful being who would oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, and demand and receive the homage which is due to God alone. Peter also speaks of the evil of the last days, and Jude too, and especially in its form of apostasy; and in the Revelation we are permitted to behold its final form in "Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." (Rev. xvii. 5.)

To understand this aright it must be borne in mind, that when the saints are caught away, the Church in its outward form, *i.e.* the profession of Christianity, will still remain. Only real Christians will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. There will therefore be thousands (not to say millions) of mere nominal believers left behind. And doubtless this profession will at the outset be maintained; and the churches and chapels, and other places where professing Christians meet, will carry on as before their religious services. The bells will ring, and the congregations, though thinned by the absence of those who

were the children of God, will assemble; and hymns will be sung, prayers repeated or made, and sermons delivered. But now that He that restrained the development of the mystery of iniquity—the Spirit of God in the Church—now that He is gone, evil will be unbridled, and hearts that shrunk before from receiving teachings, infidel in their character, which undermined the authority of the word of God, and the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, will soon fall completely under their sway. Yea, in the solemn and awful language of Scripture, "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thess. ii. 10, 11.) Thus they will be gradually prepared to fall under the influence and power of antichrist, and therewith utterly to abandon even the form of Christianity. And it is not a little remarkable, as one has said, "that the apostasy will develop itself under the three forms in which man has been in relationship with God: *Nature*—it is the man of sin unrestrained, who exalts himself; *Judaism*—he sits as God in the temple of God; *Christianity*—it is to this that the term apostasy is directly applied in the passage before us." (2 Thess. ii.) How fearful the prospect! And how sad it is to notice this mystery of iniquity so plainly working in the present day, boldly rearing its head in the

pulpits of Christendom, and proclaiming, without let or hindrance, doctrines which subvert the very foundations of revealed truth, and thereby preparing the way, as soon as the Church is gone, for the advent of the man of sin.

2. The Antichrist. If we now consider a little more closely the character of this personage we shall have a clearer understanding of the whole subject. He is mentioned as the man of sin, &c., as we have already seen in connection with the apostasy; but we may find traces of him both in the Old and New Testaments. He is termed "the king" in Daniel (xi. 36), the "idol shepherd" in Zechariah (xi. 17); but it is in the epistles of John that he is specified as the antichrist. (1 John ii. 18–22; 2 John 7.) In Revelation he is termed a "beast."*

Now it must be distinctly understood that antichrist is not a figurative term for some evil principle or system, but that it indicates an actual person. Whoever will take the trouble to read the various scriptures in which he is mentioned will at once perceive this. There is reason, moreover, to conclude that he will be not a Gentile, but a Jew. Thus our Lord, doubtless in allusion to this incarnation of evil, says, "If another shall

* This term "beast" is not the same as that applied to the four living creatures. (Rev. vi. 4–9.) As specifying antichrist, as well as the head of the imperial power, it means strictly a wild animal.

come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John v. 43); and this is inconceivable, excepting he were of their own nation. Indeed he will present himself as the Messiah in his antagonism to Christ, and thus he is termed "the king" in Daniel, who, speaking of him, says that he will not "regard the God of his fathers," plainly pointing out his Jewish lineage as well as his apostate character. Indeed he tells us that he will "exalt himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done." (Dan. xi. 36 *et seq.*)

If we now turn to the book of Revelation, we shall find both his rise and the character of his actings described. Before however entering upon this it will be necessary to recall the reader's attention to the Gentile monarchies (to which a brief allusion was made in the last paper); three of which will precede, and the last be contemporaneous with the antichrist. As revealed to Daniel, and by him announced to Nebuchadnezzar, four monarchies were to reach down to the end. Those of Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece have appeared, and passed away. The fourth, symbolised by the legs of iron, and the "feet part of iron and of clay," is the last; for in the vision which Nebuchadnezzar saw, "a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his

feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces . . . and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." (Dan. ii. 34, 35.)

This last is the Roman empire—first in its pristine energy and resistless strength, as set forth under the emblem of iron, and then in its final form of ten kingdoms, foreshadowed by the ten toes, welded together in one confederation under a supreme head. Now in Rev. xiii. we have described first of all the rise of the imperial power, of the Roman empire in its final form. John says, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up from the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy." (Rev. xiii. 1.) To cite the words of another, "The sea sets forth the unformed mass of the people under a troubled state of the world—people in great agitation, like the restless waves of the deep. And it is out of that mass of anarchy and confusion that an imperial power rises." The "beast" that thus appears is characterised by having seven heads and ten horns, which prepares us for the statement that "the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority" (*v.* 2), inasmuch as we find the dragon himself so distinguished in the previous chapter (xii. 3); and this transfer of character-

istics, as marking the source of the "beast's" power, is subsequent, it should be remarked, to Satan's expulsion from heaven. (xii. 9.) This is indicated moreover in another way. "The crowns were upon the heads of the dragon, but upon the horns of the beast; that is, in the Roman empire you have the exercise of the power represented as a matter of fact, but in Satan's case merely as a matter of principle, or the root of the thing. It is a question of source and character, not history."

We have, then, here set before us the final form of the Gentile power, animated and energised by Satan, and possessing in itself all the features that marked each of its predecessors. (*v.* 2; see Daniel vii. 4–6.) The seven heads signify the successive forms of power that have existed, but now concentrated in the "beast;" the ten horns are kings, and these ten will finally unite under one supreme head. "The ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast." (Rev. xvii. 9–13.) There will be such a display of power as the world has never seen; and since both its source and energy are alike Satanic, it will all be directed against God and His people. "And he (the beast) opened his

mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwelt in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given unto him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. xiii. 6–8.) It will be a time of open antagonism against God, and therefore of fearful tribulation for the saints.

In connection with all this there arises another "beast;" not out of the sea, as was the case with his predecessor, but out of the earth, at a time therefore when there is settled government, under the order and sway indeed of the first beast. This is the antichrist. He has "two horns like a lamb, and spake like a dragon." (*v.* 11.) He is thus an imitator of, while in direct antagonism to, Christ; but his voice reveals his true character. He acts, as will be seen, as a kind of deputy of the first "beast;" exercising his power, and causing "the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." (*v.* 12.) He, moreover, works miracles, or seeming miracles, and thereby deceiving the dwellers upon the earth, he causes that they should make an image to the first beast, and worship it. And the

more effectually to accomplish his purposes he has "power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." (*vv.* 15–17.)

There will be thus a kind of mock trinity, composed of Satan, the first beast, and the false prophet (Rev. xix. 20); and the object of all their strivings will be to exclude God from the earth, and to usurp His place in the minds of men. The first beast, it will be seen, is the supreme secular power; the second, or the antichrist, acting under the first, has his domain in the religious sphere; while Satan is the inspirer and energy of both. We cannot here go into further details, as we shall see something more of the actings of antichrist in connection with the great tribulation. But it is well to remind ourselves that all the workings of error, and all the activities of men's minds, apart from Christ, have but one goal; for they all look towards, and will finally be embodied in this hateful antagonist of God and His Christ. St. John warns the believers

of his day that the spirit of antichrist was already abroad (1 John iv. 3); and it is necessary therefore, especially at a time when infidelity is ever waxing bolder, to be on the watch, and to ponder well these delineations of the coming man of sin, so that we may be preserved, in the grace of our God, from all association with that which, as it is the offspring of Satan, is also the mark of hostility to Christ. At the present moment it is especially necessary to be vigilant, for there are many indications abroad that Satan is busily employed in marshalling and training his forces for the coming conflict. But, as ever, his movements are most subtle. Not yet does he dare to avow open antagonism to Christ; but he can, and does, influence the minds of men against the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and he uses for this purpose those who are its avowed teachers. Our foes are they of our own household. But as long as we adhere to the word of God—refusing human wisdom and human reasonings—and look to be guided alone by the Holy Spirit, we shall escape the snare, and be kept true to Christ.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION.

THERE will be also, in connection with the sway of the antichrist, another event of transcendent importance. Notices of it are found scattered throughout the prophets, as well as parts of the New Testament scriptures. It is generally designated as the great tribulation; but if the subject is closely examined it will be seen that this is but one feature of this fearful time of trial through which those upon the earth at that period will have to pass. In fact there will be a time of unexampled trouble, both for the Jews and the Gentiles; and we propose in this paper to collect some of the information which Scripture affords upon this subject, as well as to show who are the saints that will have to pass through this burning fiery furnace.

1. The time of trouble for the Jews. Jeremiah distinctly speaks of this, and to understand it clearly we will cite the passage with its context: "Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto

thee in a book. For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. And these are the words that the Lord spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus saith the Lord; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? *Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.* For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and I will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. (Jer. xxx. 2–9.) Three things are evident from this scripture. First, that Israel (as we have seen in a former paper) will yet be restored to their own land; that after this—or after the restoration of many—there will be a time of unparalleled trouble; and thirdly, that then will be their final deliverance and blessing. The connection of these three things fixes the period of their tribulation

and shows that it will be after their return to their own land, and before the appearing of the Lord.

If we now turn to the prophet Daniel we shall find similar testimony. After speaking of the actings of the antichrist (Daniel xi. 36–45), he says: "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: *and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even* to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." (Daniel xii. 1.) Again, we find that, when in their own land, and in connection with the doings of the antichrist, and hence after the Lord has returned for His people, and before His appearing, the Jews will pass through a time of trouble such as there never was before.

Our Lord speaks of the same thing. Forewarning His disciples, in answer to their question, "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" He says, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house," etc. "But pray ye

that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day: *for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.* And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Matt. xxiv. 15–22; also Mark xiii. 14–20.) This scripture is extremely important on many accounts. It connects the tribulation spoken of with an event foretold by Daniel, and hence with the antichrist, and also reveals the cause as well as the period of this unexampled trouble. (See Daniel xii. 11 with ix. 27.)

Now connecting the several scriptures given, we learn that after the restoration of the Jews, exposed again, as in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes (see Dan. xi. 21–31), to the hostility of the king of the north (Syria), the Jews for protection enter into a covenant with the first "beast"—the head of the revived Roman empire. It is to this Daniel refers when he says, "And he" (*i.e.* the Roman prince) "shall confirm a" (not *the*, but *a*) "covenant with many" (or rather the many) "for one week;" *i.e.* for a week of years—seven years. But we are further told that "in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease." (Dan. ix. 27.) By the covenant which this prince had entered into with the Jews, it is evident that he had engaged to protect them in their religious

observances; but now, in association with the antichrist, he is false to his treaty — orders the daily sacrifice to be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate to be set up (Dan. xii. 11) in the holy place. That is, an idol is set up in the temple. (Read 2 Thess. ii. 4; and compare Rev. xiii. 11–17.) It is to this our Lord refers in the passage we have cited; and He gives the setting up of this "abomination of desolation" as the signal of flight for the godly remnant who will be found at that time in Jerusalem. Thereon a decree will be issued to the effect that all are to worship the image that has thus usurped the place of God, and together with this the time of tribulation will commence—raging with unheard-of fury against all who refuse to obey this decree, and indeed against the Jews as such, and extending, as we may see further on, throughout the whole world.

In the mercy of God this fiery trial is limited to the half week, and will therefore only last three years and a half. This is the forty and two months, or the twelve hundred and sixty days, so constantly mentioned in the book of Revelation. This coincides with the testimony of the two witnesses (Rev. xi.) and the divine judgments—the woes—therewith connected; and during this period also the devil, cast down to earth, vomits out his great wrath against the remnant of the woman's seed,

which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus. (Rev. xii. 9–17.) And it is he, the dragon, that gives power unto the "beast," that inspires all the actings of the head of the Roman empire, and of the antichrist against the people of God. Combining these things together some idea may be formed of the unequalled character of this tribulation. It is satanic both in its source and energy, containing every element of suffering which Satan's malignant hate can invent and compound; but it is used by God to chasten the Jewish nation for their crowning sin in the rejection of their Messiah. If we add, that even the godly subjects of it will have no sense of God's favour, though His Spirit is working in their hearts, we shall in some degree understand the words of our Lord: "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

This tribulation, as already said, specially affects the Jews. The passages cited from Jeremiah and Daniel confessedly apply to them, and the express reference of our Lord to the latter prophet, besides other indications in His discourse, leaves no room for doubt that He also had the same people in view. The past history of the nation, and the awful guilt they incurred in crucifying their Messiah, will help us to understand both its reason and object, while at the same time it is a consola-

tion to remember that in every case where it is spoken of, it is speedily followed by the deliverance and blessing of God's elect remnant.

2. Besides "Jacob's trouble," we read also of *the* great tribulation. This is mentioned in Rev. vii. In the first part of the chapter four angels are seen "standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." (*vv.* 1–3.) Accordingly one hundred and forty-four thousand are sealed out of the twelve tribes, God's spared remnant of Israel. Thereon we read, "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." (*vv.* 9, 10.) It is concerning this innumerable multitude that one of the twenty-four elders asked John, "Who are these arrayed in white robes? and whence came

they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which come out of *great tribulation*, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (*vv.* 13, 14.) Now we are only stating what every one acquainted with the original readily admits, when we say that it should be read, "out of *the* great tribulation." This immense multitude therefore have been brought through it, and are in the scene before us a saved and rejoicing host. We have consequently a plain proof that there will be not only unparalled trouble for the Jewish nation, but also, and probably about the same time (it may be a little before) a similar period of tribulation for the Gentiles—"all nations, kindreds, and people, and tongues." This would seem to be the same event as that of which our Lord speaks as "the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Rev. iii. 10.) As to its source and character, little if anything is revealed; but it is sufficiently accounted for by the fearful state into which the world will be plunged after the removal of the Church, and by the fact that the "beast," who will open "his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven," will have power "over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth

shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. xiii. 5–8.)

3. The question now occurs, whether the church will be found in the tribulation? If not, who are the saints that are seen in it? Those who have read the earlier papers of this series will be already furnished with the answer; but as the subject is important, and there may be some who will only see the present paper, it may be advisable to recall the Scripture teaching on this point. In the first place it is abundantly clear, if our interpretation of the Scripture is correct, that the church will be caught away before this period. Thus we find in Rev. xix. that the beast and the false prophet (the antichrist) are taken and destroyed at the Lord's appearing. (*vv.* 11–21.) In 2 Thess. we also learn that the Lord will consume that wicked one (the antichrist) "with the brightness of His coming." But we are taught in Colossians that "when Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." (Chap. iii. 4.) In the Scripture already referred to (Rev. xix.) it is also said that "the armies which were in heaven followed Him" (the Word of God) "upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." (*v.* 14.) From verse 8 we gather that the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. The saints (the church) in both of these

Scriptures are represented as coming *with* Christ, and hence it is undeniable that they must have been caught up to be with Him previously. The structure of the book of Revelation shows the same thing. "Write," said the Lord to John, "the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter"—after these. (Rev. i. 19.) The first chapter contains what he saw; the second and third, "the things which are"—the church dispensation; and the rest of the book deals with the things after the church period has closed. Hence, immediately after the third chapter, the twenty-four elders are seen in heaven sitting upon thrones, clothed in white raiment, and with crowns of gold on their head. (Chap. iv. 4.) Who are these? Their crowns bespeak their kingly, as their dress reveals their priestly, character, and hence points back plainly to Rev. i. 6. They are therefore the saints, and thus are found translated to heaven *before* the commencement of the tribulation.

But it may be enquired, Who then are the great multitude which no man could number of Rev. vii., who are distinctly said to come out of the great tribulation? Now if the elders symbolize the church—not excluding the saints of past dispensations—it is clear that this multitude cannot point to the same class. The elders are in heaven, and this redeemed multitude are upon the earth;

and this distinction helps us to understand who they are. They are, as described, a vast number of Gentiles brought through the tribulation into blessing, and will therefore enter with Christ upon the glories and blessings of His millennial kingdom; nay, they are to have a special place under His sway. "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light upon them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (*vv.* 15–17.)

The other branch of the question remains, Who are the saints seen in the tribulation? They are God's elect remnant from among the Jews. This may be seen from Matt. xxiv. It is of those in Judæa our Lord speaks. (*v.* 16.) They are to pray that their flight might not be on the Sabbath (the seventh) day (*v.* 20)—a direction that would have no significance except for a godly Jew under law; they are warned against false Christs (*vv.* 23, 24) —a warning which would scarcely be understood by Christians who know that Christ is at the right hand of God; and finally, the elect are not gathered until after the tribulation, &c., and the

appearing, whereas, as we have seen, the church will appear with Christ. Indications of the same character could be collected if needful from the Revelation; but we have already shown that the elders in heaven prove that the church could not be on the earth during the tribulation. There is therefore abundant evidence to show that they are godly Jews, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who will be cast into this burning fiery furnace, which is to be heated "seven times more than it was wont to be heated." Their sorrows and cries during this time of unequalled anguish are traced and expressed in many of the Psalms. Believers of this dispensation are "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, *which delivered us from the wrath to come.*" (1 Thess. i. 9, 10.) For it is to them that our Lord addresses these words, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Rev. iii. 10.)

CHAPTER IX.

THE APPEARING OF CHRIST.

THE difference between the Lord's coming and His appearing is, that in the former case He comes *for* His saints, and in the latter *with* His saints. The kingdom therefore is always connected with His appearing, as it is then that He will assume His power, and "have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." (Ps. lxxii. 8.) This event will be totally unexpected. Buried in profound slumber, and deaf to all warning, the world, under the strong delusion which has been sent upon it, will have believed a lie, Satan's falsehood, and trusted his masterpiece, the antichrist. Men will have at length found their happiness in forgetting God; and hence "as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away: so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matt. xxiv. 38, 39.) Yea, so sudden will it be, bursting with horror

upon an astonished and careless world, that "as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day." (Luke xvii. 24.)

But for the more intelligent conception of this wonderful event, it is advisable to obtain a general idea of the state of things then existing. Towards the close of the tribulation, described in the last paper, there will be a coalition of hostile powers against the Jews. It is thus spoken of in one of the Psalms: "They have taken crafty counsel against Thy people, and consulted against Thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance." (Ps. lxxxiii. 3, 4.) The chief actors in this confederacy would seem to be the Assyrian, so often spoken of by Isaiah (see Isa. x. 24; xiv. 25, &c.), otherwise the king of the north, or the little horn of Daniel viii., the first "beast," *i.e.* the head of the revived Roman empire, and the false prophet—the anti-christ. (Rev. xiii. xix.) Zechariah refers to this when he cries in the name of the Lord, "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah, and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden

themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." (Zech. xii. 2, 3.) It is Satan, as ever, who inspires the hearts of these enemies of Israel, but the Lord uses them to chastise the apostate nation, and hence Zechariah also says, "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle." (xiv. 1, 2.) In Revelation we find other chief actors in the scene, though their hostility is there described as against the Lamb and against His saints, and presumably, therefore, we have there a later development of their schemes, occasioned by the appearing of Christ. John says, "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army." (Rev. xix. 19.)

Combining these accounts, together with the additional details to be found in Zechariah, the order of events may be indicated. All nations are gathered to battle against Jerusalem, and "the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, *and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.*" (Zech. xiv. 2.) But at this juncture, when they are wreaking their vengeance upon this unhappy people, when the

malignant purposes of Satan are near their accomplishment, "*then* shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle." (Zech. xiv. 3.) But Satan's instruments are not to be baulked of their prey, and goaded on to the crowning act of their impious course, led by the "beast" and the false prophet, who have long been seeking to wipe out the name of God and His Christ from the earth, and to erase their memory from the hearts of men, they dare now "to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army." They thus rush to their doom; for "the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh." (Rev. xix. 20, 21.) Isaiah speaks of this when he says, "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked" (one) (Isa. xi. 4); and St. Paul, "And then shall that wicked (one) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming."

(2 Thess. ii. 8.) Thus God arises, and His enemies are scattered.

If we turn now to another scripture, we shall find other details connected with the appearing. After describing the tribulation, our Lord proceeds: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," etc. (Matt. xxiv. 29, 30.) The prophet Joel spoke in like manner: "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come." (Joel ii. 30, 31.) There will be thus signs above and below to herald the appearing of Christ, when He comes with ten thousands of His saints, "when every eye shall see Him, and they [also] which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." (Rev. i. 7.)

It will, therefore, be a scene of awful and impressive grandeur; for it will be the "appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour

Jesus Christ" (Titus ii. 13)—God's public display in His own glory of the One who was once rejected and crucified, but who now returns as the Son of man to take up the sovereignty of the whole world. And them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him (1 Thess. iv. 14), associated in glory with their Lord, as they were once associated with Him in His rejection; for He comes to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed. (2 Thess. i. 10.)

Having touched upon the fact and manner of His appearing, we may indicate some of its accompanying events. One of these has already been noted—the destruction of His foes. Thereon follows the conversion of Israel: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of

Nathan apart, and their wives apart. . . . In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." (Zech. xii. 9–14, xiii. 1.) As soon as the church is removed, God will begin to act by His Spirit in the hearts of some of His ancient people—the remnant so constantly mentioned in the Psalms and the prophets; and these, as may be gathered from the Psalms and portions of Isaiah, will be bowed to the dust, under the sense of God's holy indignation against His people Israel on account of their apostasy; and it is this feeling, combined with their fearful trouble, that gives character to their cries as there recorded. It is at this moment, when the furnace into which they have been cast burns most fiercely, and when they are hanging as it were over the abyss of utter destruction, that the Lord appears for them, and they instantly recognize and look upon Him whom they have pierced. The true Joseph discovers Himself to His brethren, and they are at once plunged into bitter sorrow and humiliation on account of their, and their nation's sin. But provision is made for this also in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and they can now cry, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord: we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." (Isa. xxv. 9.)

It is not only the remnant in Jerusalem that will be affected; for we find that in connection with His appearing "He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matt. xxiv. 31.) Wherever they are found not one will escape the notice of His eye, but all will be brought to share in the blessings of the kingdom which He comes to establish. As we read in Isaiah, "He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." (Isa. xi. 12.) It may be that this will not be completely accomplished until after the commencement of His reign; for after the display of His power and glory, after the Lord has come "with fire, and with His chariots like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire," some of the saved are sent forth to declare His glory among the Gentiles; and it is said that "they (the Gentiles) shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord." (Isa. lxvi. 15–20.)

There is another event of great importance to be noted in connection with, and probably preparatory to, the establishment of the kingdom. After describing the destruction of the "beast" and the false prophet, and the slaughter of their followers, John says: "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled." (Rev. xx. 1–3.) Thus the Lord asserts His power in judgment upon the whole trinity of evil—Satan, the "beast," and the false prophet—which had impiously risen up against Him, and blasphemously usurped His authority; and at the same time He delivers His people—the elect of Israel—and thereby clears the way for, and lays the foundations of, His millennial sway.

Leaving, however, the consideration of the kingdom itself to a future paper, we shall now ask the reader's attention to those whom Christ will associate with Himself in His reign. There are several distinct classes that will have this honour. Everyone understands that believers of this dispensation will reign with Christ. This is too plainly asserted

to admit of a single doubt. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." (2 Tim. ii. 12.) But it is not so generally apprehended that there are others to be singled out for this special exaltation; and yet this is as distinctly stated in the Scriptures. John says: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which [those who] had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; *and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.* But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." (Rev. xx. 4–6.) The class sitting on thrones to whom judgment is given is composed of the armies that followed Christ out of heaven (Rev. xix. 14)—the saints who had been caught up previously to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. iv.); in a word, the Church, and perhaps the saints of previous dispensations. But there are other two classes; first, those who were martyred during the power of the antichrist—those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and

for the word of God; and secondly, those who stood aloof from his seductions, and, unmoved by his threats, refused to receive his distinguishing sign. As a special mark of the Lord's favour and approbation, in recompense for their fidelity amid the general unfaithfulness, they are made partakers of the first resurrection, and consequently of association with Christ in His kingdom. They share both in the priestly and kingly dignity —the wondrous honour they inherit through the grace of Him who had marked their sufferings, and rejoiced in their constancy to His name and testimony. It is not forgotten that the force of this passage is often explained away by the contention that the resurrection here spoken of is figurative. If so, the resurrection and judgment described in the latter part of the chapter will also be figurative, and thus the whole truth of a final judgment will be frittered away. No; words so plain cannot be robbed of their significance, to say nothing of their perfect agreement with other portions of the word of God. Blessed prospect for the saints of God! And how will they rejoice, not so much in their association with Christ in the splendours of His kingdom, unspeakable as will be the honour, but in the fact of His receiving the place belonging to Him both by title and purchase! There are even great voices in heaven to celebrate the event, saying, "The kingdoms of

this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats (thrones), fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned." (Rev. xi. 15–18.) But with what terror will this poor world be filled, when they behold the One whom they refused and rejected coming in power and great glory, to judge everything now according to the standard of His immutable righteousness! And He will come "as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (1 Thess. v. 2, 3.)

> "Can this be He, once wont to stray
> A pilgrim on the world's highway;
> Opprest by power, and mocked by pride,
> The Nazarene—the Crucified?"

CHAPTER X.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

In the present dispensation grace reigns through righteousness (Rom. v. 21), in the eternal state righteousness will dwell (2 Peter iii. 13); but in the millennial kingdom righteousness will reign. This indeed will be its characteristic according to that word of the prophet, "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness" (Isa. xxxii. 1), or to another of the psalmist, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre." (xlv. 6.) There are, indeed, two types in Scripture of Christ as King—David and Solomon. David pourtrays Him in figure as King of righteousness, and Solomon as Prince of peace. These two are combined in Melchizedek, king of Salem "first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace." (Heb. vii. 2.) These two things, it will be seen, are the distinguishing features of the sway of Christ, the one preceding, and indeed producing the other; for "the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of

righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever." (Isa. xxxii. 17.)

It will be therefore evident to the reader that Christ can be in no sense said to be King of the Church. To it He stands in a closer relationship, even that of Head; for believers now are united to Him by the Spirit of God, and are consequently members of His body. True, He is a King as to title, though at present He is a rejected King; and it is as true that the believer owns no authority but His; but it is a confusion of dispensations to aver that Christ is now reigning as King. He will do so; but it will not be until He comes forth in the manner described in the last paper. At the present moment He is sitting at the right hand of God, and there He will continue to sit until His enemies are made His footstool. Then He will appear, and proceed to put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. (1 Cor. xv. 24, 25.) This is the kingdom—the kingdom as so explained—that falls to be considered in the present paper. The kingdom of heaven exists now (Matt. xiii.), so also the kingdom of God (John iii.), and believers are said to be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. i. 13), but the reign of Christ as King is confined to the millennium. Thus Mary was told concerning Him, that "the Lord God shall give

unto Him the throne of His father David." (Luke i. 32.) It is obvious that this promise has never yet been fulfilled; for when He was presented to the Jews as their Messiah they would not receive Him, and finally cried, "We have no king but Cæsar." (John xix. 15.) But every word of God must stand, and thus He will yet be the King of Israel, and not only of Israel, for as Son of man He inherits still wider glories, "and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." (Dan. vii. 27.) Israel will be the centre of this universal dominion, and it will be through them that He will govern the nations upon the earth.

First, then, on the assumption of His throne, which the reader will now understand is consequent upon His appearing, He will act in judgment after the pattern of David; that is, He will judge everything He finds according to righteousness. Hence the psalmist says, "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment." (Psalm lxxii. 1, 2.) He will therefore "gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity," and "the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day there shall be one Lord, and His name one." (Zech. xiv. 9.)

We have a remarkable scene of this character in Matt. xxv. Having established His throne in

righteousness, all nations are gathered before Him for judgment. This is expressly connected with His kingdom: "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations." (*vv.* 31, 32.) It is the only time that our Lord applies the title of King to Himself: "Then shall the *King* say unto them," etc. (*vv.* 34–40.) This shows that the kingdom has been founded — marking, indeed, the commencement of His millennial sway. If now we examine the features of this session of judgment, it will be manifest that there is no pretext whatever for confounding it with that of the great white throne (Rev. xx.), or for deducing from it the popular idea of a general judgment—of believers and unbelievers together. *It is, in fact, a judgment of living nations;* for there is no scriptural precedent for terming the dead "the nations." There are three classes here apparent—the sheep, the goats, and the "brethren" of the King. It will be observed that the way in which the nations had treated the King's "brethren" becomes the ground of their classification, whether among the sheep or among the goats. This fact is therefore the key to the whole scene. Who then are the King's "brethren"? Very clearly they must be Jews—His kinsmen according to the flesh, but also His true servants.

We may thus probably find a clue to them in Isaiah lxvi., in a passage already adduced. There we find that after the Lord has come in judgment some of the saved are sent to declare His glory among the Gentiles. So in the scene before us, the King's "brethren" have evidently gone forth as His messengers among the nations, and they are therefore invested with a special place and authority, even as the ambassadors of a sovereign now are clothed with all the honour and dignity of the one they represent. The principle on which they are sent forth is that on which the Lord sent out the twelve: "He that receiveth you receiveth me." (Matt. x. 40.) Hence the King says to those on His right hand, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me;" and they are made to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. In like manner He says to those on His left hand, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt. xxv. 34–46.)

Thus Christ as the King, by the display of His power in righteous judgment, obtains universal dominion; for "the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall

down before Him: all nations shall serve Him." (Ps. lxxii. 10, 11.) Thereon, having put down all rule and all authority and power, He reigns as Prince of peace. "His name shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed." (Ps. lxxii. 17.)

Leaving the reader to study for himself in the psalms and prophets the details of His millennial kingdom, we may point out a few of its leading features.

(1.) *Jerusalem will recover its former glory;* nay, its future condition will as far surpass its former, as the glory of Christ as King will outshine that of David and Solomon. "The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought." Again: "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet;

and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations." (Isa. lx. 10–15.) We likewise read: "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God" (Isa. lxii. 3; see many other passages of the same character); and surely it is only fitting that the metropolis of Messiah's kingdom should be suited to the worthiness, dignity, and glory of the King!

(2.) *The temple and its services will be revived in surpassing splendour.* (Ezek. xl.–xlvi.) Some have felt a difficulty as to sacrifices being restored; but the difficulty vanishes when it is remembered that these sacrifices will be connected with an earthly people, and an earthly temple, and will be commemorative in their character. In the old dispensation they had no efficacy whatever apart from their reference to Christ; for it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins (Heb. x. 4); and in the millennium they will look back to that one sacrifice for sin which was offered upon the cross, as those under the Mosaic economy foreshadowed it. They will, therefore, but recall to the grateful, worshipping hearts of God's people, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son which cleanseth from all sin.

(3.) *All nations will come up to Jerusalem to worship.* We thus read in the prophet: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob: and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isa. ii. 2, 3.) Zechariah also speaks of a similar thing. He says: "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles." (xiv. 16.)

(4.) *The animal creation will share in the peace and blessing of that day.* "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock." (Isa. lxv. 25; see also Isa. xi. 6–9.) It is added to the above scripture, "And dust shall be the serpent's meat;" showing, we suppose, that the serpent will be excluded from the deliverance from thraldom under which even the brute creation has hitherto groaned. But as we know, "The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the

glorious liberty of the children of God." (Rom. viii. 21.)

(5.) *The curse will be removed from the earth.* When Adam fell the ground was cursed on his account. Whatever the alleviation of this sentence under Noah, it is not completely abrogated until the reign of Messiah. The psalmist accordingly sings, "Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us." (Ps. lxvii. 5, 6.) Amos in like manner prophesies, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt." (ix. 13.) For it is at this time that "the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God." (Isa. xxxv. 1, 2.)

(6.) *There will be no death, excepting in the way of judgment, throughout the whole of the thousand years.* "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall

be cursed." (Isa. lxv. 20.) The meaning of this scripture would seem to be, that death will be entirely exceptional, and then only in the way of righteous judgment. The age of Methuselah may therefore not only be equalled, but surpassed, in this blessed period of Messiah's reign.

(7.) *All injustice will be instantly redressed.* This is connected of necessity with the Messiah's righteous rule. Hence we read, "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their souls from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight." (Ps. lxxii. 12–14.) Men fondly dream that this is the goal of human enlightenment and progress; but they are ignorant of, or forget, the incurable corruption of human nature, and hence do not consider that even though the whole world were to obtain just and equal laws, they would fail either in their administration or application. No; Christ is the only hope for the earth, as for the saint; for "He cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity." (Ps. xcviii. 9.)

(8.) But, notwithstanding all these blessed features, *there will be rebellions even under the reign of Christ.* In Psalm lxvi. we read, "Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit

themselves unto thee;" or, as it is in the margin, "yield feigned obedience." The same expression is found in another psalm. "As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me," or "yield feigned obedience." (Ps. xviii. 44.) It would appear from these statements that the display of Christ's power in judgment will be so overwhelming, as it surely will be in the judgment upon the nations assembled against Jerusalem, that many, not bowed in heart, will yet be terrified into the acceptance of His rule. They will profess subjection while their hearts are alienated from Him; hence they will be as easily tempted to renounce as to submit to His sway. Accordingly we find that after—perhaps not long after—the establishment of His throne, Gog, with a multitude of followers, "a great company, and a mighty army," comes up against His people Israel, "as a cloud to cover the land." But he comes to meet with immediate and utter destruction, so great and overwhelming that "seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land." (Ezek. xxxviii. xxxix.)

Again, at the close of the millennium there is a still larger rebellion, directly attributed to the action of Satan. "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations

which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog [not to be confounded with the Gog of Ezekiel], to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city." (Rev. xx. 7–9.) Thus every dispensation closes with failure as a striking testimony to the character and nature of man. Tried in every way, without law and under law, under grace, and at last under the personal reign of the Messiah, he shows that he cannot be improved, that the flesh remains the same, that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, that the carnal mind is enmity with God. The Jews chose a Cæsar, yea, a Barabbas, in preference to Christ; and finally man accepts Satan himself, and under his leadership goes to attack and destroy "the camp of the saints . . . and the beloved city" that are under the special protection of the glorified Messiah. The issue could be but one. There remains nothing for God but to vindicate the righteousness of the throne of Christ; and accordingly we read that "fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever." (Rev. xx. 9, 10.) Thus closes

the period of the thousand years. It was introduced in judgment, and it is closed by judgment; but it will yet be the time of earth's blessing and joy. For it must be remembered that Satan is bound until the close of the period, and hence while the flesh remains the same, the power of evil being thus absent, all the influences to which man is subject will be on the side of Christ. It will be a total reversal of the present state of things; so that the psalmist may well cry, "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord: for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth." (Psalm xcvi. 11–13.)

But we must leave the reader to enter for himself into a closer study of the subject. Abundant materials for the purpose will be found throughout the Scriptures; and if he but read in dependence upon the Spirit for guidance and teaching, and with his eye upon Christ, it will not be without profit and blessing.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NEW JERUSALEM.

So far we have treated only, in the preceding paper, of the earthly characteristics of the millennium. It will be necessary therefore to consider also its heavenly aspect, as presented to us in the new Jerusalem. If the reader will turn to Revelation xix., he will observe that from the eleventh verse of that chapter down to the eighth verse of chapter xxi., we have a series of consecutive events. It begins with the coming forth of the Lord Jesus, followed by the armies that were in heaven, to judgment; and then we have the destruction, as already seen, of the "beast," the false prophet, and their hosts, the binding of Satan, the thousand years, the loosing of Satan, &c., the great white throne, and the eternal state (which will be considered in a future paper). Immediately upon this we are led back, in the ninth verse, to a description of the new Jerusalem, which reaches onward to chapter xxii.; and in this scripture we have the character of the city during the millennium, and its relation, indeed, to the millennial earth

John says: "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the last seven plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the Bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God." (xxi. 9–11.) The first thing that strikes the reader is the designed contrast between this scripture and that in chapter xvii.: "And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters." (*v.* 1.) In this chapter we have Babylon depicted, in chapter xxi. the new Jerusalem. The former is man's city, and the latter God's; the one the expression of what man is, the other the perfection of God's thoughts, robed in the glory of God. Let the reader carefully ponder the contrast, and learn its divine lessons. Another thing must be remarked: the city is "the Bride, the Lamb's wife." This determines its character. It is the Church which Christ has now presented "to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing . . . . holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 27), beautified with His own beauty, and having the glory of God. Its position is also to be noted. Both in

the second and tenth verses it is seen to come down from God out of heaven; but a comparison of the two scriptures will show us the place the city occupies throughout the thousand years. In the tenth verse it is seen descending out of heaven from God; but after the similar statement in the second verse, John hears the proclamation, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men," showing that the city now had come down to, and rested upon, the new earth. The inference therefore is —and one which is abundantly substantiated from other scriptures—that in the tenth verse the city descends *towards* the millennial earth, but rests above it, over the earthly Jerusalem. Poised thus, as it were, above the earthly city, it will be a visible object of light and glory; and this perhaps may explain the language which the prophet addressed to Jerusalem, "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." (Isa. lx. 19.)

We may now examine some of its characteristics. (1) It is divine in its origin, and heavenly in its character. It comes down from God out of heaven. (2) It has "the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Her light therefore is the outshining of the glory in which

she is set; for jasper is a symbol of the glory of God. (Rev. iv. 3.) The Church is glorified together with Christ in the glory of God, and as such is here displayed. In verses 18 and 19, it is stated that the building of the wall, and the first foundation, are both alike of jasper. The glory of God is thus the stability and security, as well as the light and beauty, of the heavenly city. But the wall excluded everything unsuitable to that glory, as well as guarded everything according to it. (3) The next feature is, that it "had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." (*vv.* 12–14.) It must be carefully observed that all this concerns the wall of the city, and its distinguishing characteristic is the number twelve—twelve angels, twelve tribes, and twelve apostles. As one has said, "It has twelve gates. Angels are become the willing doorkeepers of the great city, the fruit of Christ's redemption work in glory. This marked the possession too, by man thus brought in the assembly to glory, of the highest place in the creation, and providential order of God, of which angels had previously been the

administrators. The twelve gates are full human perfectness of governmental administrative power. The gate was the place of judgment. Twelve, we have often seen, notes perfection and governmental power. The character of it is noted by the names of the twelve tribes. God had so governed these. They were not the foundation; but this character of power was found there. There were twelve foundations; but these were the twelve apostles of the Lamb. They were, in their work, the foundation of the heavenly city. Thus the creative and providential display of power, the governmental (Jehovah), and the assembly once founded at Jerusalem, are all brought together in the heavenly city, the organized seat of heavenly power. It is not presented as the bride, though it be "the Bride, the Lamb's wife." It is not in the Pauline character of nearness of blessing to Christ. It is the assembly as founded at Jerusalem under the twelve, the organized seat of heavenly power, the new and now heavenly capital of God's government." (4) Then it is measured (*vv.* 15–17), indicating that it is owned and appropriated by God. The measurements are, it need hardly be said, symbolical—symbolical of a divinely-given perfectness. Thus the city is a cube—equal on every side—finite perfection. (5) Then we have the materials of which the city and the foundations were formed. Again we borrow the

language of another: "The city was formed, in its nature, in divine righteousness and holiness—gold transparent as glass. That which was now by the Word wrought in and applied to men below was the very nature of the whole place. (Comp. Eph. iv. 24.) The precious stones, or varied display of God's nature, who is light, in connection with the creature (seen in creation, Ezek. xxviii.; in grace in the high priest's breastplate), now shown in permanent glory, and adorned the foundations of the city. The gates had the moral beauty (every several gate was of one pearl) which attracted Christ in the assembly, and in a glorious way. That on which men walked, instead of bringing danger of defilement, was itself righteous and holy; the streets, all that men came in contact with, were righteousness and holiness—gold transparent as glass." (6) It has no temple. "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." (*v.* 22.) A temple would speak of concealment, or of a special place where God manifested Himself to those who drew nigh to worship. But all this is past. Even now, while here, we have liberty of access into the holiest of all (Heb. x.); yea, our place is in the light as God is in the light. In the heavenly city, therefore, God is fully displayed.

"The Lamb is there, my soul—
There God Himself doth rest,

In love divine diffused through all,
With Him supremely blest.

God and the Lamb—'tis well,
I know that source divine
Of joy and love no tongue can tell,
Yet know that all is mine."

(7.) There is no need of created light. "And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." (*v.* 23.) If God is fully displayed this would be impossible. When He stands disclosed His glory lightens the city, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

"But who that glorious blaze
Of living light shall tell?
There all His brightness God displays,
And the Lamb's glories dwell.

God and the Lamb shall there
The light and temple be;
And radiant hosts for ever share
The unveiled mystery."

Having directed attention to the characteristics of the city, we may now pass to consider what is next indicated; viz., the relation of the city to the millennial earth. First we are told that "the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it." (*v.* 24.) Two slight alterations will make this scripture far more

intelligible. The words "of them that are saved" are omitted in all the best editions of the New Testament, as being an unwarranted addition; and the word translated "into" should be given as "to," or "unto;" or otherwise it would seem as if the kings of the earth had access into the heavenly city! What we are taught then is, first, that the new Jerusalem will shine with such surpassing lustre that the nations will walk in its light—the light of the glory in which it is set, and by which it is illumined. It will be thus suspended above the earthly Jerusalem, and from thence will transmit the rays of the glory of God by which it is encompassed and transfused. Moreover, the kings of the earth will render their homage by bringing their glory and honour, as offerings, unto it; thus recognizing it as the object of God's delight, and the scene of the display of His presence and glory, because the throne of God and the Lamb are there.

It is then added that "the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into (unto) it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." (*vv.* 25–27.) One cannot fail to be struck with the correspondency between this language and that addressed to the earthly Jerusalem by

the prophet: "Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought." (Isa. lx. 11.) And undoubtedly there will be an intimate relation between the two cities, similar to that between the holy place and the holy of holies in the tabernacle; though the distinction must ever be remembered, that the one city is heavenly, and the other earthly in its character. The open gates are an emblem of the perfect security which the city enjoys, there being "no adversary or evil occurrent;" while the absence of night tells that evil has passed away, and hence there is perpetual day. "It is not merely the absence of evil, but the impossibility of its entrance, which characterized the holy city;" for none "but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" are found within.

Next we have the river of water of life and the tree of life. "And he showed me a pure river of water of life clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve [manner of] fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." (Rev. xxii. 1, 2.) All this again speaks of the relation of the city to

the millennial earth, and reveals the source of millennial life and blessedness. The throne of God and the Lamb are the fount, as ever, of grace and life; and the leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations. The glorified only will feed upon the twelve fruits of the tree. Hence it is added, "There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there: and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." (*vv.* 3–5.) Adam after his fall was shut out of the garden, and God "placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." (Gen. iii. 24.) Now the tree of life is on either side of the street of the golden city, and the glorified saints find in its fruit sustenance and joy. The curse therefore is for ever abolished; for the throne of God and the Lamb are there, and His servants serve Him perfectly, see His face, and have His name in their foreheads. Wondrous expressions of the full and perfect bliss of the redeemed! It is now repeated that there shall be no night there, and that they have no need of created light; for God Himself is the source of their light, as of

their blessing, and His glory illuminates the whole scene. In this condition they will reign for ever and ever, associated with Christ in all the glories of His royalty and kingdom.

It is therefore not only the earthly blessing we are admitted to view, but God has also brought before us the varied perfections and glories of this heavenly city, which will form such a prominent feature of the millennial period. We have not permitted ourselves to touch upon the question of communication between the heavenly and the earthly spheres. That such communication will exist is beyond a doubt; but upon its modes, or the exact way in which Christ will carry on the government of the earth as King, Scripture is silent. But we are told that "the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." (Isa. ix. 6, 7.)

CHAPTER XII.

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE AND THE ETERNAL STATE.

THE millennium closes the long series of earthly dispensations. God's dealings with the earth, whether in grace, mercy, or judgment, are now concluded; and hence the earth and the heaven disappear before the face of Him who has taken His seat on the great white throne. (Rev. xx. 11.) The final judgment comes between the end of the millennium and the commencement of the eternal state; but before this, an event takes place, dismissed in a word in the scripture just adduced, of great magnitude and importance. It is the destruction of the earth and the heavens by fire. St. Peter thus speaks of it: "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." And again: "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein" (rather, on account of which) "the

heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." (2 Peter iii. 10, 12.) The day of the Lord, it should be remarked, covers the whole period of the thousand years. It comes as a thief, introduced as it will be by the Lord's appearing; and at its close, the consumption of the earth and heavens by fire takes place. Hence St. Peter says, "In the which," because it is included in, though at the end of, the day of the Lord. It is the same event indicated in the Revelation by the words, "From whose face the heaven and the earth fled away," stating the fact only without giving the means of their disappearance; but, as we see from St. Peter, fire is God's chosen instrumentality for the destruction of this present scene. Then follows the great white throne; the final judgment therefore takes place after the passing away of the earth and the heaven. The character of this judgment will demand a closer examination.

First, then, as to the Judge. It is made to appear from the authorised version that God Himself is the Judge: "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." (Chap. xx. 12.) It is, however, well known that "throne" should be substituted for "God;" and it is very clear from other scriptures that the Lord Jesus is the occupant of, the One that will sit upon, the great white throne. He Himself said, "The Father judgeth no man, but

hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." Again: "As the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man." (John v. 22–27.) With this agree also the words of St. Paul when he says that every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. ii. 10, 11.) The One therefore who was once upon this earth, but rejected and crucified, is He who will sit in judgment upon those who refused Him as Saviour and Lord; for the Father wills that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour Himself. In His occupancy therefore of this throne of judgment, God publicly vindicates Christ in the presence of men and angels, and holds Him forth as the object of universal honour and homage; so that now every knee that had refused to own Him in the day of grace must at last bow before Him in acknowledgment of His Lordship and supremacy. As seated on the great white throne, He has become the Arbiter of the eternal destinies of all His enemies.

The throne on which He sits is described as "great," and as "white." It is great as suited to the dignity of its occupant; and it is white as

a symbol of the character of the judgments that will be pronounced, every one of which will be according to the holiness of the nature of God.

This judgment is upon persons, not things, and upon unbelievers only. John says, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before the throne; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [hades] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell [hades] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (*vv.* 12–15.) If the exact statements of this Scripture are examined, it will be apparent that there is no trace of any believer in this vast and unnumbered throng. Indeed, as already shown in previous papers, all believers are caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air at His second coming. There remain therefore, besides those who are left in their graves at His return, only two classes—millennial saints, and millennial unbelievers or rebels. But millennial saints will not die; and hence, since this scene includes only the dead (*v.* 12), those who stand before His throne for

judgment are composed entirely of the wicked or unbelievers. This conclusion is established in another way. We have two kinds of books opened as the basis of judgment. There are the books of works, and there is the book of life; and it is said that "the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." (*v.* 12.) They are judged, in fact, upon two grounds—positive and negative. Their works are produced in evidence against them; and the absence of their names from the book of life shows that they have no title to mercy or favour; for "whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." There is no trace of a single one having his name there, and their works therefore become the ground of their sentence; and we know that by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (Rom. iii. 20.) As another has said, "Another element was brought into view. Sovereign grace alone had saved according to the purpose of God. There was a book of life. Whosoever was not written there was cast into the lake of fire. But it was the finally closing and separating scene for the whole race of men and this world. And though they were judged every man according to his works, yet sovereign grace only had delivered any; and whoever was not found in grace's book was cast into the lake of fire. The sea gave up

the dead in it; death and hades the dead in them. And death and hades were put an end to for ever by the divine judgment. The heaven and earth passed away, but they were to be revived; but death and hades never. There was for them only divine destruction and judgment. They are looked at as the power of Satan. He has the power of death, and the gates of hades; and hence these are for ever destroyed judicially." The last enemy, death, is now destroyed; for Christ "must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet."

Before we pass on to the eternal state, another scripture must be considered. We read in Corinthians, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then [cometh] the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith, All things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may

be all in all." (1 Cor. xv. 22–28.) This in many ways is a most remarkable passage, comprehending as it does all dispensations, or at least covering them in its scope. The immediate subject of the apostle is that of the resurrection. After therefore stating the fact that all die in Adam, and the corresponding truth that all shall be made alive in Christ—*i.e.* the "all" connected with Christ, as the "all" in the former case include all connected with Adam—he gives us the order in which the latter shall be accomplished. The resurrection of Christ was the first-fruits of this wondrous harvest, they that are Christ's, which should be gathered in at His coming. "Then cometh the end." But between this "then" and the foregoing "afterward" the millennium is included, so that "the end" brings us down to its close; and, indeed, farther still, down to the close of the judgment of the great white throne. It is this point which needs to be observed; for it is the termination, as such, of the mediatorial kingdom. Hence we find that He delivers up the kingdom to God the Father. All things having been subdued under Him, He yields up the kingdom to Him that put all things under Him, and Himself takes a subject place, that henceforward God may be all in all. It is the close and the surrender of His earthly kingdom, and thenceforward as the glorified man He is Himself subject. But it must be carefully

remembered that His essential Deity for ever abides; indeed, the term "God," used thus absolutely, includes Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is a wondrous revelation; for thereby we learn that throughout eternity He will retain His glorified humanity, moving among the ranks of the redeemed, all of whom are conformed to His image, as the FIRSTBORN among many brethren. If therefore we have, on the one hand, in this scripture the surrender of the earthly kingdom, we have also, on the other, the introduction to the eternal state, wherein God is all in all.

But it is in the Revelation that we find the fullest description of the eternal state: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." (Rev. xxi. 1.) Isaiah had spoken of new heavens and a new earth (chap. lxv. 17), but only in a moral sense as connected with the millennium. St. Peter takes up his language, and under the guidance of the Holy Ghost gives to it a deeper meaning. "Nevertheless," he says, "we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Peter iii. 13.) But it is in the Revelation that we see in the vision the actual fulfilment of the promise. We are moreover told that "there was no more sea;" for the time of separation was over and gone, and every

part of the new scene was brought into ordered beauty before God; everything would be according to His own mind. Thereon the holy city comes into view. "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." There are several points to be noticed in this wondrous description of the perfection of the eternal state. First, the holy city is seen coming down from God out of heaven. As we have before remarked, during the millennium it is set above the earthly Jerusalem; but now, though John goes back both to its origin and character, it descends lower still, until it rests upon the new earth which has now been formed. The millennial earth could not have received it, because, great as was its blessedness, it could not, being still imperfect, have been the home of the eternal tabernacle of God. This is reserved for the new earth wherein righteousness would dwell—have its abiding home. And mark how the city

is depicted—"prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." The thousand years have passed, and the city is still robed in her bridal beauty. Age cannot dim her youth, and hence she is still "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." The proclamation is now made, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men." We gather therefore that the glorified Church is the dwelling-place of God; and just as in the wilderness encampment the tribes were arranged round about the tabernacle, so here we find men—the saints of other dispensations—grouped about God's tabernacle in the eternal state. The Lord had said to His people Israel in the wilderness, "I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people." (Lev. xxvi. 11, 12; see also Ezekiel xxxvii. 26, 27.) And now in the unfoldings of His grace, according to the purposes of His love, His word is accomplished after the perfection of His own thoughts. His tabernacle is now with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, their God.

Next we have the blessedness of the inhabitants of the scene. But how is it described? In the very way that appeals the most powerfully to hearts that have known the sorrows and tribula-

tions of the wilderness. There will be the absence of everything that had caused us grief or anguish here. First, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes;" not a trace of former sorrow shall remain, and God Himself will remove it. What infinite tenderness in the expression that God Himself shall do this! Even as a mother will tenderly wipe away the tears of her child, so God Himself will delight to wipe away all tears from the eyes of His saints. And once wiped away they can never return; for "there shall be no more death" (how many tears has death wrung from bereaved ones in this scene!), "neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." All these, the former, things will have for ever passed away—these dark clouds—before the perpetual sunlight and joy of the eternal presence of God.

"And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful. And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things" (rather, these things); "and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the

lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." (*vv.* 5–8.) Thus all is made new; the new creation has reached its consummation. Everything within and without is very good; perfect, as measured by the holiness of God. It is therefore a scene in which He can dwell with complacency and delight. All has flowed from Himself, and all redounds to His glory; for He is both Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

The scene is then closed by the announcement of grace, promise and judgment. Every one that is athirst may receive of the fountain of the water of life freely. The overcomer shall inherit all these things. To borrow another's language, "The world for the Christian is now a great Rephidim. This is the twofold portion of his final blessedness: he shall have God for His God, and be His son. Those who feared this path—did not overcome the world and Satan, but had walked in iniquity—would have their part in the lake of fire. This closes the history of God's ways." It will be remarked that there is no mention of the Lamb. The reason is, as has been pointed out, that the Son also Himself is now subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

"FOR OF HIM, AND THROUGH HIM, AND TO HIM, ARE ALL THINGS: TO WHOM BE GLORY FOR EVER. AMEN."

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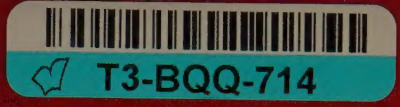
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